

January 20, 2021

Via Email

The Honorable Douglas A. Ducey
Governor of Arizona
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Governor Ducey:

We represent many of the frontline healthcare physicians in Arizona who have been battling the COVID-19 pandemic these past 10 months. We appreciate the previous and current mitigation efforts, staffing increases, and the recent increase in vaccine distribution that has been provided. However, **based on the current data, the statewide community spread continues to be severe.**

These recent, more infectious variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus originally discovered in the United Kingdom and South Africa, which have already reached our country's shores, have only increased the urgency in ensuring that we do what we can to stop the spread of COVID-19. Our internal hospital data shows that compared to the last year's summer surge, the mortality rates now are increased in patients who are admitted to our ICUs. Plainly stated, these patients are sicker, and more are dying from the virus.

Our resources are exhausted, and we are struggling to handle the continuous waves of new patients that we see every day. There is significant concern that this is negatively impacting our ability to provide routine and necessary care to our patients. This problem is compounded by the fact that there have been a lot of mixed messages and misinformation, especially on social media, that has confused the public and eroded their trust in public health.

As per your recent interviews with the press, we agree with you that the vaccinations should hopefully provide a boost to Arizona and help protect us from the surging virus. The issue is that we are weeks, and more likely, months away from the vaccine having the positive impact we all hope it will have.

With all of this in mind, **we ask that you institute proven, enforceable, enhanced mitigation efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19.** We understand the important link between public health and the economy, and so we make these asks for your consideration, and in no particular order of importance, while trying to balance both those concerns. These efforts include:

- Continue to aggressively expand access to the vaccine. We appreciate the executive order allowing ADHS to be more engaged with vaccine distribution. We ask that you take that further, and now consider private physician offices, and other appropriate settings, so that mass vaccinations can occur throughout the state. We know you support the vaccination effort, allowing more physicians access to administering them will hasten the effort to get to herd immunity.

- Continue to increase staffing and assist in retaining staff in Arizona. We thank you for the staffing that has already been provided by the state, it has helped keep us afloat during these surges. Yet as our hospitalizations continue to rise, we are having issues retaining our previous staff, which then maintains us at status quo instead of increasing staffing, which was the original purpose of this outside recruitment. If we wish to increase our bed availability for patients, we need the staff to care for them. We ask that you continue to do what you can to not only recruit new staff but assist us in keeping our staff here in Arizona, where they are needed.
- Support outpatient strategies to decrease the number of patients needing hospital care. We all agree that decreasing the need for hospitalization will help decompress our health systems. One effective way is using the monoclonal antibody treatment that have been provided. We know about the recent efforts to engage poison control to help distribute information about the antibodies, but we ask that you assist in getting these treatments to outpatient centers, incentivizing them to provide 24/7 access to this therapy.
- Except for essential services, limit public gatherings to no more than 25 people. We ask that you continue to encourage people to only socialize with members of the same household. The recent holidays have proven to be the super-spreader events we all worried they would be. We cannot handle more of these events, and we need to stop them now before they cause more harm.
- Implement a statewide and enforceable face covering mandate that focuses on business compliance rather than individuals. It has been proven, masks work. We thank you for repeatedly emphasizing the need to wear a mask, but a uniform requirement throughout the state, in our opinion, would help remove any air for doubt.
- Standardize our school's approach to virus control to allow for the schools to remain open. Everyone agrees that we want our kids in school, but the students, the teachers, and staff need to be safe. We ask for a uniform approach, along with the financial assistance, to ensure that this can be accomplished.
- Follow the testing and quarantine guidelines recommended by the CDC. We all know the benefits of living in Arizona, especially during the winter months, so it is no surprise that people wish to visit and stay here during that time. But we do not know where they have been and if they had been exposed. To prevent further spread, it would make sense for us to follow those CDC recommendations to ensure that all Arizonans remain safe.
- Closing bars and nightclubs and limiting restaurant operations to outside dining and take-out service. The bars and nightclubs could be reopened earlier, and the restaurant restrictions could be lifted earlier if the state returns to moderate community spread. We believe this support must include financial protection to these small businesses who have been hit so hard by this pandemic.

Governor Ducey, we need your help. If we continue at this current pace, we fear that we will all be forced into crisis standard of care, a place none of us want to be in. We know that these mitigation efforts can be challenging, and we offer whatever assistance we can provide, to implement them.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. We honestly believe they will save Arizona lives.

Sincerely,

Ross F. Goldberg, MD

President
Arizona Medical Association

James Patrick Carty, DO

Chief of Staff
Abrazo Scottsdale, Abrazo Central, &
Abrazo Mesa Hospitals

Nicholas Bastiampillae, DO

Chief of Staff
Carondelet St. Joseph's Hospital

Edith Hernandez, MD

Chief of Staff
Carondelet Holy Cross Hospital

Kris Samadar, MD

Chief of Staff
HonorHealth Scottsdale Shea Medical Center

Roozbeh Rassadi, MD

Chief of Staff
HonorHealth John C. Lincoln Medical Center

Bernard Gburek, MD

Chief of Staff
HonorHealth Scottsdale Thompson Peak Med Ctr

Michelle K-B Williams, MD

Chief of Staff Elect
Tucson Medical Center

Sam Durrani, MD

Chief of Staff
HonorHealth Deer Valley Medical Center

Brian Dursteler, MD

Chief of Staff
Abrazo West Hospital

Nathaniel Rial, MD

Chief of Staff
Carondelet St. Mary's & Carondelet Marana Hospitals

Alpa Shah, MD

Chief of Staff
HonorHealth Scottsdale Osborn Medical Center

Patrick Sciara, MD

Chair
HonorHealth Network Executive Committee

Amy Axberg, MD

Chief of Staff
HonorHealth Sonoran Crossing Medical Center

William A. Ellert, MD

Chief Medical Officer
Tenet Healthcare – Arizona

William Dachman, MD

Chief of Staff
Valleywise Health