



Middle Tennessee Mayors Caucus

March 21, 2020

The Honorable Bill Lee
Governor of Tennessee
Tennessee State Capitol
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Subject: Support for Statewide Shelter in Place to Curtail COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Governor Lee:

On behalf of several mayors and county executives across Middle Tennessee, I write to thank you for your leadership during these unprecedented times and to voice our support for a statewide Shelter in Place or “stay at home” directive to combat the growing number of cases of COVID-19 in our communities. While there is no specific roadmap to deal with the escalating and destructive disease, a March 20, 2020 letter signed by groups representing more than 6,000 physicians and public health professionals across the Tennessee medical community makes a strong case that such government action is critical to minimizing the public health consequences. We are proud of the selfless response of many local elected and businesses leaders across our State, but we must also emphasize that our ability to manage the pandemic at the local level is limited and varied. Moreover, while some businesses have taken swift and decisive action, others need more guidance in order to feel confident in making the necessary, but tough decisions about their operations.

We feel strongly that the quickest path to recovery is a uniform response to this challenge. We urge you to consider the recommendation of the medical community to implement this directive and we are willing to weigh in on the specific details, if necessary.

We are extremely grateful for your thoughtful and careful approach during these trying times. Please know that we are here to support you and the State of Tennessee with our full capacity.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Moore', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ken Moore, City of Franklin Mayor
Mayors Caucus Chair

Cc: Members of the Middle Tennessee Delegation to the TN General Assembly
David Aronoff, M.D., Director of Infectious Diseases, Vanderbilt University Medical Center

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March 20, 2020

Governor Lee:

Per the escalating and destructive situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, we humbly ask you to act swiftly on behalf of the citizens of Tennessee.

It is our estimation that we have little time to “flatten the curve” on the current situation. China and South Korea have made great progress by imposing restrictive measures. We ask that Tennessee do the same.

The replication rate (R_0) of COVID-19 is the primary area upon which we can impact this deadly virus. Compared to the annual influenza, COVID-19 is anywhere from 60 to 100% more “efficient” at replicating itself. For instance, on average 10 patients with the influenza will infect 13 individuals. With COVID-19, (R_0 of 2.0 to 2.5), those same 10 will infect 20 to 25 individuals if we do nothing.

We are many months away from having a vaccine or approved FDA treatment and there is a high likelihood of inadequate hospital and ventilator capacity. According to very conservative estimates 20% of our state’s population will become infected. Based on hospital bed availability in Tennessee, we would surge above hospital and ICU bed capacity by 132% and 298%, respectively. Other estimates predict 40-60% infectivity. This would prove disastrous.

The mortality rate of COVID-19 is at minimum 10x, and possibly up to 34x deadlier than seasonal influenza. The incubation time of COVID-19 is up to 14 days, versus only 1 to 4 days with influenza, therefore apparently well individuals already infected will infect numerous people without knowing it.

China and South Korea have made great strides by prohibiting travel and closure of non-essential industry and business. We must act with the same level of boldness.

We request that effective midnight Sunday, March 22nd that Tennessee declare a shelter in place for 14 days with only essential personnel being deployed during this emergency. We also request a self-quarantine of 14 days for all individuals returning from international and domestic travel.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration to this urgent matter.

Signed,

Aaron Milstone, MD, FCCP, Pulmonology & Critical Care
Tufik Assad, MD, Pulmonology & Critical Care
Devin Sherman, MD, FCCP Pulmonology & Critical Care
Laura Hunt, MD, FCCP Pulmonology & Critical Care
David Aronoff, MD, Division Chair Vanderbilt Infectious Disease
Richard Lane Past Governor of the Tennessee Chapter of the American College of Physicians
K Michael Smith President Elect of the Tennessee Medical Association
Elise Denny, MD Governor of the Tennessee Medical Association
Tracey Doering, MD, President of the American College of Physicians
Adele Maurer Lewis, MD, Medical Examiner for the State of Tennessee
And 600 Concerned Physicians from the State of Tennessee