



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
DISTRICT 4
File #: 20-390

Board Meeting Date: 6/12/2020

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Supervisor Warren Slocum, District 4
Subject: Letter in Support of the County Health Officer's Attestation For Variance to the State of California's Roadmap to Pandemic Resilience to Modify the Stay-At-Home Order; And Authorize And Direct The County Health Officer To Transmit The Attestation And Its Accompanying Documents To The California Department Of Public Health.

RECOMMENDATION:

Board of Supervisors' consideration of action to:

- A) Authorize and direct the President of the Board of Supervisors to execute a letter in support of the County Health Officer's Attestation for Variance to the State of California's Roadmap to Pandemic Resilience to Modify the Stay-at-Home Order; and
- B) Authorize and direct the County Health Officer to transmit the Attestation and its accompanying documents to the California Department of Public Health.

BACKGROUND:

On March 4, 2020, Governor Newsom proclaimed a State of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and on March 16, 2020, San Mateo County Health Officer, Dr. Scott Morrow, issued a Shelter in Place order for San Mateo County residents. Subject to certain exceptions for essential activities, that order directed all San Mateo County residents to remain in their homes ("Shelter in Place Order"). Among the first in the State, the order and subsequent orders incorporated key behaviors necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19: hand-washing, social distancing, and wearing face coverings as well as isolation and quarantine as a result of exposure. The order and

subsequent orders emphasized additional measures such as symptom screening, increased sanitization, and avoidance of large in-person gatherings.

Subsequently, on March 19, 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-33-20, directing all California residents to heed the State Public Health Officer's Stay-at-Home order ("Stay-at-Home Order"), which requires all residents to stay at home except for work in critical infrastructure sectors or otherwise to facilitate authorized necessary activities.

On April 14, 2020, the State presented the Pandemic Roadmap, now called the Resilience Roadmap ("Roadmap"), a four-stage plan for modifying the Stay-at-Home Order. Each stage allows additional public facilities and sectors of our local economy to re-open if they abide by specific reopening procedures that emphasize key behaviors such as requiring face coverings and social distancing. When the Roadmap was announced, most of the state was at Stage 1. On May 4, 2020, the State announced that entry into Stage 2 of the plan would be imminent for counties that met specific criteria set forth in the Roadmap. At that time, San Mateo County did not meet all the criteria required to move to Stage 2.

On May 7, 2020, pursuant to Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-60-29,, the State Public Health Officer issued guidance to counties informing them of the opportunity to apply for a variance to allow counties to adopt aspects of Stage 2 prior to achieving all of the Roadmap's Stage 2 criteria, through a process of county self-attestation to meet a set of criteria related to county disease prevalence and preparedness. Those requirements include thresholds for COVID-19 cases, test and hospital capacity and trends, a plan to assist vulnerable populations and preparations for dealing with a future COVID-19 surge. If approved by the State, the variance allows counties to adopt aspects of Stage 2 at a rate and in an order determined by the County Local Health Officer.

As the County Health Officer has relayed in his most recent Statement, the County's assessment of the local epidemiology, which is closely tied to that of the Bay Area region, is that we must balance the risks that COVID-19 continues to present with the very important needs vital to overall health and well-being. Having worked through an initial phase with very strong adherence to the Shelter-in-Place Order by so many residents and sectors, the balancing of risks underlying the State Roadmap provides a reasonable foundation. The Health Officer will continue to offer guidance tailored to our local circumstances.

DISCUSSION:

San Mateo County is now ready to submit a variance request to move to Stage 2 of the Roadmap. The most recent Health Officer Order, published June 4, 2020, has

confirmed the Health Officer's intent to fully harmonize the County's reopening of businesses with the activities allowed by the State on the timelines set by the State.

San Mateo County's progress in achieving State benchmarks has been steady and now offers the opportunity for full synchronization with the State Roadmap: Health and private health care and laboratory systems have built up testing capacity to exceed the State target of 1,151 test results per day. Public Health contact investigation and tracing is underway with 30 staff assigned and a plan in place to achieve the State target of 115 contact investigators through redirection of additional Disaster Service Workers.

Regular polling of hospital and skilled nursing facility providers confirms that they have access to their own supply chains for personal protective equipment (PPE) and when they do not have 14 days of PPE on hand, they know how to use the mutual aid system to obtain it. The County has invested substantial resources to obtain PPE reserves and the State also has prioritized resolving systemic supply challenges that remain related to N95 masks.

While the number of COVID-19 admissions to hospitals has fluctuated in excess of the State benchmark of 5%, hospital surge capacity remains strong and capable of increasing by at least the State standard of 35%. In the forty-four days between April 28 and June 10, 2020, there were only three days when COVID-19 admissions to hospitals exceeded the State target of 20. On those days 25, 22, and 22 patients were admitted. Similarly, the total census of COVID-19 patients in hospitals during that period ranged significantly between 33 and 82 patients. We are close to meeting the State target of no more than 20 admissions per day; more importantly, hospital capacity is strong to surge as needed to meet patient demand.

County staff, in collaboration with our many community partners, has addressed the key needs of our most vulnerable residents, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic and the County's Shelter in Place Order. Homeless shelters in the County have implemented social distancing protocols and high-risk residents have been relocated to hotels. Free testing has been offered throughout the County, with sites rotated through densely populated low-income communities that face barriers to access, including transportation, and often have large numbers of high-risk frontline workers who have more exposure. The rotation of test sites also has helped reach communities of color that historically have experienced a disproportionate burden of chronic disease and thus may have greater vulnerability to the COVID-19 virus. Multiple programs, including Great Plates Delivered and social calls to elders, have helped to provide for the homebound and elderly during the term of the Shelter in Place Order.

The County has also worked closely with our cities and other community partners to both share information about COVID-19 response and to gather community input on a

Community-wide COVID-19 Recovery Strategic Plan. Work is also starting this week on a community-wide Recovery Implementation Plan.

The data, programs and plans developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic over the last months allow the County to respond to all the requirements in the variance form. In the variance form prepared by staff, the County requests that the reopening of all sectors in San Mateo County be aligned with State directed sector re-openings. If the variance is approved, when the State moves to Stage 3 of the Roadmap, San Mateo County will move to Stage 3 at the same time. Consequently, the County Health Officer would no longer determine when different business sectors can reopen, since that timing would be determined based on the current Stage under the Roadmap. What will remain in future County Health Officer orders will be local requirements that emphasize the key behaviors necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19: hand-washing, social distancing, and wearing face coverings as well as isolation and quarantine as a result of exposure. The County Health Officer and Health personnel will also remain available to provide guidance regarding implementation of current and future San Mateo County Health Orders.

The County will submit the variance documents, including a comprehensive Variance Attestation Form, to the California Department of Public Health (“CDPH”) on June 12, 2020. The State will then review the variance/Attestation Form and determine if additional information is needed. If the variance package is deemed complete, CDPH will either approve the variance or inform the County if modifications are required. While we hope the review proceeds quickly, County staff has no commitment from CDPH regarding anticipated processing time.

It is important for all stakeholders to be aware that no changes can be made to the current Health Orders with respect to permitted sectors/activities until direction is received from the CDPH. This means that businesses that are currently closed or operating under specific conditions cannot change their operations until the County receives a response to the variance request. The CDPH response will determine what additional activities can be permitted and, once the CDPH acts on the County’s request, authorized changes will be confirmed in a new County Health Order.

It is most important for all stakeholders to understand that this further harmonization with the Roadmap is an attempt to strike a balance between the need to protect the public’s health and prevent the overwhelming of health care systems, and the need to start reversing the economic devastation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus continues to circulate in our community, and the increase in interactions among people that this step will allow is likely to result in the virus spreading at a higher rate. Older adults and people with underlying medical conditions continue to be vulnerable. The risk of exposure is real, and we all, the public and businesses, need to fully do our part to minimize transmission of the virus, by continuing to emphasize the key behaviors

that prevent the spread: hand-washing, social distancing including avoiding large gatherings, and wearing face coverings.

The County Manager and the County Health Officer will report to your Board as soon as a response is received from the state and will provide a timeline for the issuance of any revised Health Orders.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no cost to the County associated with submitting the variance request to the CDPH.