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ARIZONA'S 9TH DISTRICT

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July 6, 2020

The Honorable Douglas A. Ducey
Governor, State of Arizona
1900 West Washington Street
Ninth Floor
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Governor Ducey:

Today, Arizona became the eighth state to surpass 100,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases, and it is the State's failures that have made us a national hotspot for widespread infection. Significant action is necessary to stem the tide, and recent steps—though encouraging—fall far short.

I respectfully urge you to take three immediate steps to put Arizona on the path to containing COVID-19. First, use Arizona's share of federal CARES Act funds to expand lab capacity for additional testing and to speed up COVID-19 test results. Second, develop a written statewide contact tracing plan, share it with local health officials and the public—and implement it. Third, mandate the use of face coverings in public when social distancing is not possible statewide.

Step 1: Speed Up COVID-19 Results by Expanding Testing and Lab Capacity

It has been more than three weeks since I urged the state to use its resources to expand the capacity of labs so that Arizonans would receive quicker COVID-19 test results. In that time, precious time was lost—and the situation has only worsened. Not only is getting tested a trying process for many Arizonans, but far too many are waiting one to two weeks to receive results. This makes key tactics to contain the virus, such as contact tracing, nearly worthless. And it is frustrating that state leaders see their neighbors wait in line for a test for 12 hours or more and do nothing about it.

I am disappointed that Arizona continues to withhold many of the funds it received from Congress through the federal CARES Act. The State must urgently spend more of these resources to (1) expand testing capacity and (2) expand lab capacity so that Arizonans receive test results in a timely manner.

Step 2: Develop a Written Contact Tracing Plan, Share It, and Implement It

For months, the State has fallen unacceptably short of one of its core preparedness responsibilities during this pandemic: the ability to trace contacts of people who test positive for COVID-19. Establishing an expanded contact tracing effort was a "gating criteria" for reopening set by the White House, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the State itself.

Yet, despite assurances from the Governor's Office and Dr. Cara Christ, it is apparent that when the State's stay-at-home order was lifted, Arizona did not even have a workable contact tracing system, let alone the "robust" program Arizonans were assured would be in place.

For months, Dr. Christ told Arizonans that the state "implemented" an "enhanced" statewide contact tracing effort, yet local public health officials still haven't seen a plan. Despite that, on May 12, successful statewide contact tracing was given as a reason Arizona had the "green light" to lift the stay-at-home order. And in June, top officials defensively insisted that contact tracing was "implemented" by the State, even with mounting evidence to the contrary.

During this entire time, the State's rhetoric has not matched reality. From late March to early June—nearly a month after the stay-at-home order was lifted—the Maricopa County Department of Public Health did not contact individuals who may have been exposed to COVID-19. And still today, as positive cases in Arizona surge, the overwhelming majority of those who may have been exposed to COVID-19 in Arizona will not be contacted by a contact tracer at all—in part because of the failure of the State to support local public health departments and provide clear statewide contact tracing standards.

State leaders were asleep at the wheel—unacceptably unaware or deliberately dishonest about what was happening at the local level, and without a real plan to make up for these shortcomings at the state level. Instead of scaling efforts up, the State let our situation spiral.

To contain COVID-19 and slow its spread, it is essential that the Governor's Office and the Department of Health Services develop a *written* contact tracing plan, share it with local public health officials and the public, and implement it.

Step 3: Mandate the Use of Face Coverings Throughout Arizona

Many Arizonans, including me, were encouraged when you gave local governments the ability to adopt public mask mandates. But the last few weeks make clear that to successfully stem the tide, more aggressive action is necessary—and a statewide mandate is imperative.

Just this weekend, the city of Prescott, one of the few cities to not require masks, held its famous rodeo and welcomed attendees, many of whom were older. Although it is generally wise for individual counties, cities and towns to determine what is best for its residents, public health considerations in this circumstance require a statewide approach. This virus does not recognize city or county lines, and a surge of COVID-19 cases in Yavapai County is likely to impact hospital capacity for Coconino and Maricopa counties.

Our state is in crisis. The number of cases in the state has doubled in just the last two weeks. Bold leadership—and urgent action—is necessary to keep Arizonans safe. These three steps are not exhaustive but can easily be accomplished and are essential to put our state on the right path.

Sincerely yours,



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress