

California State Senate

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November 20, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

I respectfully request you make fundamental adjustments to your existing Blueprint for a Safer Economy in order to better protect the health and safety of all Californians.

As of November 16, 2020, forty-one counties with a combined population of roughly 37 million people are in the Blueprint's purple (widespread) tier. If the current positivity rate holds, today is the beginning of a statewide shutdown with much of the state in the most restrictive tier and the rest likely to head in that direction. This means that almost all Californians are prohibited from dining indoors at a restaurant, exercising indoors at their gymnasium, finding comfort in their Faith by worshipping indoors, and feeding their intellectual curiosity by visiting an indoor museum exhibit. Elderly citizens are dying alone without the comfort of their loved ones, fathers are unable to witness their children being born, children are suffering with inadequate social and educational opportunities, and societal checks for domestic violence and child abuse have disappeared, leaving those victims at greater risk. The entities you continue to keep closed are overwhelmingly small businesses that have done everything possible to hang on through your first round of closures. Many will be unable to survive yet another full-blown shutdown. Millions of Californians continue to face the consequences of your actions with reduced work hours, or, worse yet, unemployment.

Yet, if these 37 million people want to get a haircut or manicure at a salon, a tattoo or piercing at a body art studio, purchase a wedding ring at a jewelry store, shop for clothing at a department store or local mall, or get a deep-tissue massage, they are free to do so – all while being indoors. I am not suggesting you curtail these activities. On the contrary; I am confident each can be performed safely indoors with proper safeguards. What I am suggesting is that if these services are allowed to be performed indoors at all tiers, then you can also allow restaurant dining, working out at a gym, attending a spiritual service, and visiting a museum. Allowing these

activities to be performed outdoors is an inadequate, if not a cruel alternative, especially during the winter.

As you might know, recent studies show incidents involving mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, suicide attempts and drug overdose deaths are all increasing, not in response to the disease, but rather from coping with the stress created by shutdowns like yours – shutdowns intended to protect Californians. In my view, protecting residents from COVID is more than simply keeping them free of the disease. We must also ensure COVID protection efforts do not harm their livelihoods, their ways of life, and the local economies and communities they have built. I believe these are not mutually exclusive goals, and all must be pursued with equal effort.

Accordingly, I strongly urge you to allow gyms, museums, places of worship, and restaurants in purple tier counties to at least operate indoors in the same manner they do in red (substantial) counties. Implementing these modifications to the Blueprint will not only help keep Californians safe from COVID, these changes will protect them in a more complete manner. Thank you for your serious consideration of my letter. Should you wish to discuss further, please contact me at (916) 651-4016.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shannon Grove". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "G".

Shannon Grove
Senate Republican Leader, 16th District