



COLORADO
Department of Public
Health & Environment

Sent via email to mcbocc@mesacounty.us

April 28, 2020

Scott McInnis, Chair
Rose Pugliese, Commissioner
John Justman, Commissioner
Mesa County Board of County Commissioners
P.O. Box 20,000
544 Rood Avenue
Grand Junction, CO 81502-5010

RE: Mesa County Variance Request from portions of **Executive Order D 20 044** and **Public Health Order 20-28**

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for your April 27, 2020 submission to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) of a variance request to portions of **Executive Order D 20 044 Safer at Home** and **Public Health Order 20-28 Safer at Home**. I have had an opportunity to review your request and consider the information provided, and determine that the request is approved, with some amendments, as explained further below.

You asked for a variance related to three specific functions, including Restaurants (CDPHE Order II.A.), Places of Worship (CDPHE Order II.B. and Appendix F.5), and Gyms (CDPHE Order II.A.4.). Your COVID-19 Suppression Plan addresses particular requirements that you propose as an alternative to the Safer at Home model for each of these areas. The data and information included in your request demonstrates a strong disease prevention and response system in Mesa County, with only 39 total COVID-19 positive cases and ongoing testing which will expand with the reopening of hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers to voluntary and elective services and procedures pursuant to **Executive Order D 2020 045** and **Public Health Order 20-29**. Additionally, you have shared that your hospital and other healthcare systems are not stressed, and that you have a well-functioning public health epidemiology team as well as specific teams dedicated to particular settings, such as correctional facilities, nursing homes, and child care facilities. These are all positive indicators of a highly capable response plan to continue to address any COVID-19 disease outbreaks that may occur in Mesa County.

Regarding surveillance, you should track multiple surveillance measures including laboratory testing percent positivity as you are suggesting, and track changes in percent positivity on at least a weekly basis. Implement surveillance thresholds based on percent positivity data that

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would trigger Mesa County to revert to state Safer at Home or more conservative social distancing standards. For example, consider a threshold of two weeks of increasing percent positivity OR a weekly percent positivity value of more than 10%. The current state target for testing for COVID-19 is 10,000 tests per day. Consider adopting a similar, population adjusted target for Mesa County.

Regarding the COVID-19 Suppression Plan for reopening restaurants, I agree that reopening at a thirty percent (30%) of fire code capacity is a reasonable proposal, but have a few modifications to your list of additional requirements. First, customers must wear face coverings when entering the restaurant until seated at their tables. Restaurants cannot allow customers to wait in a lobby area for a table, rather customers should make reservations online or by phone, and every effort should be made to notify customers via text or phone call when their table is ready so no waiting in a lobby is necessary. Customers must be asked prior to entering a restaurant whether they have any symptoms of COVID-19, and any customers reporting symptoms must be excluded. Restaurant employees who are symptomatic must be excluded from the workplace and required to isolate for 7-10 days, per CDC guidance. As noted in your suppression plan, this approval is only for restaurants, bars are not authorized to open.

Places of worship may have up to fifty (50) participants. Participants must be asked whether they have COVID-19 symptoms at the door and excluded from the place of worship if symptomatic. Symptomatic employees must be excluded from the place of worship and required to remain in isolation for 7-10 days, per CDC guidance. Participants should be encouraged to wear a face covering both when entering and while present in the house of worship.

Finally, for fitness centers operating at thirty percent (30%) of fire code capacity, ill employees must be excluded from the center and required to remain in isolation for 7-10 days. Customers must be asked whether they have COVID-19 symptoms at the door and excluded from the fitness center if symptomatic. Customers should be encouraged to wear a face covering both when entering the facility and while in the facility, unless a face covering inhibits the participants ability to participate in the fitness activity. Given the many unknowns regarding how the SARS CoV-2 virus responsible for COVID-19 is spread, use of equipment in the fitness center must be limited to no closer than every other machine so that participants are not exercising right next to each other and smaller exercise rooms with poor ventilation should be discouraged from use. Finally, employees must clean and disinfect shared equipment between customer uses.

This variance approval is granted based on the facts and circumstances today as you have described them in your request; however, should circumstances change such that, for example, surges in COVID-19 transmission occurs, cases exceed the capacity for Mesa County to fully implement all effective disease control strategies as described in your request, or if resources or COVID-19 prevalence statewide in our opinion requires a different approach, CDPHE reserves the right to modify or rescind this variance approval.

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I appreciate your thoughtful approach to these challenging issues, and wish you all the best in your continuing efforts to ensure that Mesa County residents are safe and healthy as we deal with this global pandemic. Mesa County is a valued partner, and we are available to answer any questions and work with you on these matters. Please give me a call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jill Hunsaker Ryan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jill Hunsaker Ryan, MPH
Executive Director