

April 3rd, 2020

Governor Pete Ricketts
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 94848
Lincoln, NE 68509

CC: Mayor Jean Stothert; Dr. Adi Pour

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY

Governor Ricketts, Mayor Stothert, and Dr. Pour:

We, the elected officials of the Omaha metropolitan area, are coming together today to urge you to increase the efforts made within the City of Omaha and Douglas County to protect residents and reduce the spread of COVID-19. The current orders to self-quarantine, if possible, and practice of social distancing are not sufficient.

We are calling for a full stay-at-home order and the extension of social distancing requirements for all non-essential personnel through April 30, 2020, for the following reasons:

Dr. Anthony Fauci, who is the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and has led America's response to the COVID-19, has said that every state should have a stay at home order in place.

The modeling for deaths related to COVID-19 is contingent on every state being under a stay at home order from today until the end of May. If we do not have a stay at home order instituted immediately there will be an additional loss of life.

There is an ongoing shortage of supplies to fight COVID-19.

There's a national shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), ventilators, tests, and healthcare workers to address the COVID-19 crisis. A stay-at-home order would reduce community spread, allowing our doctors, nurses, and healthcare workers more time to combat COVID-19 and gather the needed supplies.

The state has already made arrangements to convert dorms at UNO, UNL, and UNK into hospitals and quarantine facilities indicating we do not have enough projected capacity at our area hospitals to treat the ill.

Nebraska has performed an insufficient number of COVID-19 tests.

There are hundreds of thousands of backlogged tests for COVID-19 in the US despite extremely limited testing. Nebraska does not have the tests, lab capacity, and resources to initiate widespread testing, resulting in the community spread cases being underdiagnosed.

Testing only of hospitalized patients and essential front-line personnel means we are risking additional community spread by providing a false sense of security. New data has shown that COVID-19 may be being spread by asymptomatic patients, and the CDC is debating asking all Americans to wear a mask/PPE in public despite the limited supply in an effort to reduce community spread. Additionally, COVID-19 may be transmissible through talking or breathing

and not just sneezing or coughing which presents a higher risk of contagion than previously believed according to the National Academy of Science.

The projected death toll is rising and Nebraskans are vulnerable.

The United States now has more COVID-19 cases than any other country in the world. The death toll is rising and is not likely to peak for weeks. New projections are estimating the best-case scenario for the United States is the loss of more than 100,000 American lives. Nebraska is projected to have more than 447 deaths. These best case scenario numbers only apply if all states observe a stay at home order by April 3, 2020. Failure to act will result in additional loss of life.

There have been multiple outbreaks at nursing facilities where vulnerable populations live. There have already been preventable outbreaks at Douglas County Health Center, Douglas County Court House, and several area nursing facilities.

Working Nebraskans are being asked to sacrifice their health and safety.

We need to do more to protect working Nebraskans. Many employers are continuing to require employees to report for duty, are not providing sick leave, and employees who refuse to work or quit to self-quarantine are not eligible for unemployment.

Governors of other states who have issued stay-at-home orders have asked that the remaining states do so as well. It is our belief that Omaha must also declare a stay-at-home order to protect residents, workers, nurses, doctors, grocery store clerks, delivery persons, and all of those who are willing to stand on the front lines of this pandemic.

Help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Please institute a stay-at-home order now. We, as local elected officials, will stand with you in making this order.

Sincerely,

Public Service Commissioner Crystal Rhoades
Douglas County Commissioner Mike Boyle
Senator Tony Vargas
Senator Justin Wayne
Senator Megan Hunt
Senator Mike McDonnell
Omaha City Councilman Vinny Palermo
OPS Board Member Marque Snow
OPS Board Member Amanda Ryan
OPS Board Member Kimara Snipe
OPPD Board Member Amanda Bogner
Learning Community Board Member Brian Thommes
MCC Board Member Ron Hug
MCC Board Member Linda McDermitt
MCC Board Member Dave Pantos
Westside District 66 School Board Director Dana Blakley