

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL
Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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WHATCOM COUNTY HEALTH BOARD

February 2, 2021

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

Governor Inslee,

We represent Whatcom County and wish to express our frustration and deep concern about the Roadmap to Recovery plan.

Whatcom County businesses and residents have been suspended in limbo since early June when our application to move to Phase 2 was approved. Since then, with the exception of a spike in cases in January, Whatcom County has not experienced high case rates and our hospital has successfully managed the medical needs of COVID-19 patients.

We learned of the changes to the Roadmap to Recovery the day they were released, without being given any opportunity to weigh in, share our experience as local elected officials, or share concerns or unintended consequences. These changes are perplexing and create whiplash for our businesses and residents. We have been patient, followed the requirements, and asked businesses to do the same. Seeing that the new strategy clearly benefits counties inequitably, it is frustrating and difficult to justify to our struggling businesses and residents.

We now witness counties with far higher case rates being granted the ability to re-open while our North region's averages are much lower and our businesses continue to suffer in lockdown. How is it fair or equitable that San Juan County, with a two-week case rate of 64/100,000 has businesses shuttered, but King County, with a two-week case rate of 300/100,000 (six times higher disease burden) is re-opening? There is no margin of error for our smaller counties; a single case increase could sink the entire region for two weeks, given the emphasis on decreased rates rather than disease burden.

The new metrics cannot be justified with science, risk, or equity. We insist on a re-opening strategy that considers case rates, not just decreases, that doesn't artificially tie diverse counties into a failed regional approach, and that moves more quickly to safely re-open businesses. The anticipated holiday surges have passed. It's time to let counties with low case rates join in the Phase 2 reopening.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barry Buchanan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Barry Buchanan, Chair
Whatcom County Health Board

C: Whatcom County Health Director Erika Lautenbach
Whatcom County Councilmembers
Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu
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