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May 18, 2020

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment  
Attention: Jill Hunsaker Ryan, Executive Director  
4300 Cherry Creek Drive South  
Denver, CO 80246

**RE: Routt County Department of Public Health Variance Request**

Dear Ms. Ryan,

Pursuant to Appendix G of Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) Public Health Order 20-28, Routt County, this letter serves in support through the partnership of the Routt County Department of Public Health (RCPH) Director, Board of Health the request for partial relief from the provisions of Governor Polis' Safer At Home Executive Order (D 2020 044) and CDPHE's Safer At Home Public Health Order (PHO 20-28). Specifically, Routt County is requesting a variance from the provisions in the state orders that impose certain restrictions on restaurants. Relief from these provisions will allow Routt County to tailor its adaptive responses and future public health orders to the COVID-19 pandemic in a manner that best addresses our county's needs based on science, data and local factors. The primary objectives of RCPH are to protect the health and welfare of the local community, suppress and stem the transmission rate of the COVID-19 virus in Routt County, and by extension, throughout the state, improve the mental health of our citizens, and continue to help protect and recover the economic health of our businesses, workforce, and citizens as a whole.

Routt County has not had a positive case identified since April 30th, likely due to both aggressive social distancing restrictions implemented through the Safe at Home Order as well as the local Public Health Orders implemented on lodging. To date we have administered 1514 tests, 1148 of which have been administered by the Public Health department. Our local public health agency will continue to regulate social behaviors, events, the types of business that may reopen, and travel into and around the county to control disease transmission. Additionally, hospital capacity in Routt County remains adequate to address COVID-19 cases as well as other medical issues in our regional service area as evidenced by an enclosed letter from UC Health Yampa Valley Medical Center.

The first two phases of the attached Routt County Suppression Plan mirror the state's Stay at Home and Safer at Home Orders. Currently, we believe local conditions support an incremental

transition from our Suppression Plan's Phase 2 to Phase 3, in a manner that follows the Safer at Home Order, while allowing our restaurants to gradually resume operations.

It is worth noting key data points that make Routt County eligible for a variance:

- Our community has been successful in staying at home, social distancing and wearing face coverings.
- Public Health Orders have been issued to restrict lodging and to require face masks of employers and customers in retail business and for the restriction of group gatherings.
- The number of cases is at 58 and there has been a substantial improvement in testing capacity since the beginning of the pandemic and Public Health currently has a community testing site available Wednesdays and Saturdays in addition to doing scheduled vulnerable population testing.
- Routt County Public Health has the capacity to investigate each new case within 24 hours, provide an isolation order and trace and quarantine close contacts.
  - RCPH can ensure active monitoring, housing and the provision of other necessities for the duration of an isolation or quarantine order, helping to make these measures successful for individuals.
  - ESF-7 of the Routt County EOC is prepared to provide economic and basic needs relief for Access and Functional Needs populations, low-income, and the recently vulnerable. This branch has the ability to provide access to food, shelter, clothing, physical and mental health resources, and case management of individuals who might be isolated or quarantined.
  - There is adequate PPE in the county for standard healthcare needs as well as COVID-19 response, and we have the infrastructure and resources in place to acquire more as needed.
  - Public Health created a Vulnerable Populations Task Force in order to activate mitigation efforts to protect the most vulnerable in the community including Casey's Pond, The Haven, Integrated Community and Horizons.
  - UCHHealth has assured the county that vigorous planning and preparation [is](#) in place, our EMS, hospital, and public health systems are poised to respond rapidly, efficiently and effectively to increased COVID-19 activity in the county.
  - Neighboring counties also have decreasing impacts on their health and medical clinics and available hospital capacity.



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The success of Routt County in stemming the tide of COVID-19 continues to come at a great cost to the social, mental, and economic health of our community. The mental wellness and economic devastation toll is tremendous, and is growing by the day.

Local conditions and capabilities continue to reflect a low incidence of the virus and improving pandemic response infrastructure and competencies. This allows for safe, informed community action outside the strict constraints of the State Orders. Allowing Routt County to customize its restrictions specifically to the conditions in the county will allow comprehensive community recovery, both in terms of health and economy.

Therefore, we are respectfully requesting that you grant Routt County's request for relief from certain restrictions in the States' Orders as detailed in this request. Our request is for the proposed re-opening plan for restaurants last until a time at which State regulations are more lenient than this proposal. This interim plan would stand until a State public health order provides the ability for restaurants to function at a higher capacity or Routt County applies for an additional CDPHE waiver.

We respectfully ask that the variance be effective immediately upon your approval. We have enclosed a copy of our local suppression plan, the specific areas where we are seeking a variance, and other materials for your review. Please understand this request is not being made lightly as Routt County appreciates the gravity of the situation facing not just our local community, but the state and country as a whole. We remain committed to being guided by strong public health considerations. If there is any additional information you need, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 970-846-7525 or [kladrow@co.routt.co.us](mailto:kladrow@co.routt.co.us). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kari Ladrow  
Routt County Public Health Director

Dr. Brian Harrington  
Routt County Medical Officer