



Wilma Chan, SUPERVISOR, THIRD DISTRICT

ALAMEDA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEES:
Health, Chair
ALL IN, Chair
Personnel & Legislative
Unincorporated Services

June 21, 2020

To: Concerned Organizations

Re: June 18th Letter regarding County Re-opening Concerns

I am in receipt of your recent memo by a number of organizations regarding concerns about the reopening of commerce, leisure and worship in Alameda County.

While I cannot speak for the entire Board or County, I feel it is important to give you my personal perspective on your concerns since you addressed your letter to the Board.

First, thank you for your acknowledgement of the early actions of our Health Officer and Agency to implement shelter in place orders and save lives. It has been a little over 3 months since the first shelter in place order was implemented, and clearly the first 2 months were spent preparing the County and its acute facilities for a surge that is still likely to come in July or August. In addition, the County has been attending to the individual needs of our 10,000 employees, many of whom are people of color, as well as our homeless population.

Generally, the Board has followed the lead of our Health Officer and other epidemiologists in determining metrics and stages of re-opening in the County. We are also affected by the Governor's orders since we are a subdivision of the state. Also, although we are a liberal/progressive County, some of our residents and businesses are not deaf to the ignorant and racist messages coming from the White House. Regardless of our personal views, we are dependent on federal aid allocated to fight the epidemic. The lack of national leadership on coordinating testing supplies and PPE has been a real hindrance (in fact President Trump stated yesterday that he would like to see less testing).

During the past 3 weeks, the State has been messaging the need to re-open and has encouraged counties to file formal "attestations" stating that they are ready to re-open at a rapid rate. Even Los Angeles which is clearly a California epicenter of the epidemic has filed an attestation. Meanwhile 7 health officers in counties with large outbreaks have been personally threatened and forced to resign.

I am proud to say that Alameda County is one of the only Counties that has not filed an attestation to re-open. I personally believe, as you do, that a rapid re-opening will have a disproportionately large impact on Black, Latinx, Hmong and other communities of color who provide the workforce for the many businesses pushing to re-open. This along with years of health disparities puts our populations of color at an overall greater risk of illness and death from the virus.

Secondly, to speak to your concerns about transparency. I agree that our populations need more access to information in order to make intelligent personal choices. Alameda County adheres to stringent HIPAA regulations promulgated years ago in order to promote data sharing across all of our internal healthcare staff.

In my opinion, this must be balanced with our responsibility to the public. I believe you will see some improvements in the period ahead.

Thirdly, in terms of your concerns regarding testing and contact tracing, the Agency will be working with community-based clinics and organizations through a \$20 million testing and communications RFP that our Board approved last Tuesday. You can find the document online, and I encourage you to apply.

Additionally, I have requested direction by our Board to our Healthcare and Social Service Agencies to implement neighborhood-based models to focus coordinated resources on highly impacted neighborhoods. These include portions of West and East Oakland, Fruitvale/San Antonio, Ashland/Cherryland and South Hayward. All In, our anti-poverty arm, will provide the backbone to coordinate all necessary Covid response (food, isolation, financial resources, etc.) along with the Health Care Service Agency convened community-based contact tracing teams.

Lastly, I want to express deep appreciation for the work of your organizations. I encourage you to help with the much-needed efforts to educate our communities of color about Covid, how to lessen risks and why testing is important. We rely on our trusted messengers like yourselves to get the word out broadly in order to prevent disease and save lives, and we need your help.

Thank you for your input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wilma Chan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Supervisor Wilma Chan