



# KITSAP COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

*Efficient, accessible and effective county services*

February 3, 2021

Robert Gelder  
DISTRICT 1

Charlotte Garrido  
DISTRICT 2

Edward E. Wolfe  
DISTRICT 3

Governor Jay Inslee  
State of Washington  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

RE: Roadmap to Recovery – Request to Move Kitsap to Phase 2

We appreciate that you have been hearing from us with some frequency of late. We find this the best way to share our thoughts with you and to establish a record of concerns and issues regarding the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Kitsap County has supported the State's science-based approach when it is consistent and fair. The issues raised below belie those principles.

We understand that Washington State is in a tough position to find a consistent way to implement the Roadmap to Recovery Plan. However, we wish to convey inconsistencies that exist in the current Plan. Our concerns include 1) the regional approach being used now after ten months of county-by-county focus, 2) Kitsap's designation in this approach and, 3) the metrics applied, specifically those based on percentage decreases in cases and hospitalizations.

First, moving from the county-by-county-approach to designated county groups may inappropriately penalize the counties succeeding in combatting the virus based on the condition of others. One county can fare especially poorly, thus inappropriately affecting the partner counties. This does not achieve a goal to reopen counties when they are shown to be ready. Local business, restricted by the public health measures (restaurants, fitness centers, dance academies, retail and others), are counting on reopening. These businesses may be unfairly penalized by the regional approach that delays this opportunity. As we see too commonly, these delays can have fatal consequences to small business.

Second, if Washington is committed to a regional approach, we do not understand why Kitsap is grouped with the Northwest. Kitsap County is consistently grouped with the Puget Sound region in planning, growth management, transportation, open space, clean air, economic development, and other regional discussions. Thousands of Kitsap County residents are employed in King, Snohomish and Pierce Counties, yet we have been grouped separately and are now left out of a near-term reopening. This decision appears arbitrary and unfair to Kitsap's governments, citizens and businesses.

Third, as has been recently documented by public health professionals, mathematicians and residents, the metrics used to determine reopening are flawed, focusing on trends versus raw data/rates that can lead to erroneous conclusions. This penalizes counties with smaller populations or lesser level of public health crisis. The use of percentages for two of the four key metrics does not accurately reflect our reality. A small number of cases or even individual hospitalizations can show a large percentage

change though not indicate COVID's current threat to the community's health. Additionally, for a community that has successfully combatted the pandemic with low case counts and hospitalizations, the percentage metrics can be punitive. This is the case in Kitsap.

Again, Kitsap County has supported of the State's approach when it is fair and consistent. Based on the issues we have described, the current *Roadmap to Recovery* implementation does not meet this test for our community. **Based on the aforementioned issues, the Board of Kitsap County Commissioners requests the State include Kitsap County in the Puget Sound region and move to Phase 2; and revise the current metrics to better reflect the public health conditions for communities of all sizes.**

We welcome the opportunity to discuss further with you and look forward to your response to our request. We would also appreciate feedback regarding the issues we raised in our previous January 15, 2021 letter. If you would like further details from us, please contact Eric Baker, Policy Manager, at [ebaker@co.kitsap.wa.us](mailto:ebaker@co.kitsap.wa.us).

Sincerely,

  
Robert Gelder  
Chair

  
Charlotte Garrido  
Commissioner

  
Edward E. Wolfe  
Commissioner

cc: Dr. Umair A. Shah, Washington State Department of Health  
Senator Rolfes  
Senator Sheldon  
Senator Randall  
Representative Simmons  
Representative Hansen  
Representative MacEwen  
Representative Griffey  
Representative Caldier  
Representative Young  
Keith Grellner, Kitsap Public Health District  
Karen Goon, Kitsap County Administrator  
Washington State Association of Counties