

To: Supervisors Greg Cox, Dianne Jacob, Kristin Gaspar, Nathan Fletcher, Jim Desmond

Cc: Wilma Wooten, MD, MPH

Re: Request for Staged Re-Opening of San Diego Businesses

Date: August 31, 2020

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding the recently announced plan to re-open a wide array of businesses in San Diego County starting on August 31, and to suggest that this move be delayed until October 1, 2020. We firmly believe the County is on the right path, as evidenced by the decreasing incidence of COVID-19 in recent weeks. However, broadly re-opening activities immediately before the Labor Day holiday weekend and while K-12 schools are resuming instruction puts the County at risk of a resurgence, especially because we have only recently moved into the red phase and have not yet fully contained the outbreak. We anticipate a rapid increase in case numbers (as happened after the Memorial Day and 4th of July holidays), and the subsequent re-closing of businesses and schools.

While the County as a whole has done a commendable job of mitigating the pandemic, the improvement has not been evenly distributed across the region. Residents of approximately two dozen historically underprivileged zip codes, primarily concentrated in South and East Counties, shoulder significantly higher incidence rates. For example, San Ysidro currently reports an average of approximately 35 new cases per 100,000 residents per day - 5 times higher than the prescribed 7 new cases to move from "widespread" to "substantial" risk, while Lemon Grove and La Mesa both consistently report over 10 new cases per 100,000 residents per day.

It is now recognized that COVID-19 is an airborne infection (<https://tinyurl.com/y2royhnz>). Thus, the highest risk of transmission occurs in crowded indoor locations, those with poor ventilation, and among individuals who are talking, singing, or speaking loudly and not wearing masks (<https://tinyurl.com/FAQ-aerosols>). Much of the spread is occurring in aerosols produced in the breath and speech of people who do not know they are sick (<https://t.co/T2Dd9mFKfO?amp=1>). Consistent with this, most outbreaks in San Diego County have been linked to clusters in indoor businesses, restaurants, gyms, and bars.

For the sake of the San Diego economy and the health of our community, we ask you to consider delaying the re-opening until after Labor Day, or if this is not possible, stepping up enforcement of masking requirements over the holiday weekend, and to develop a staged reopening plan that takes into account the relative risks of various activities due to the airborne nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. We understand that reopening many of these businesses is critically important but we would urge that a priority be placed on providing more opportunities for outdoor operation than on reinitiating indoor unmasked operations.

UCSD is finalizing plans to ensure the safety of our students, faculty, and staff while working closely with the San Diego Unified School District so that they can reopen safely, and parents can go back to work. We urge you to consider prioritizing education in your reopening plans, to

help mitigate the demographic disparities in both the health and educational impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our community, while allowing San Diego County to safely re-open and remain open.

Sincerely,

Robert Schooley (Distinguished Professor of Medicine, MD, UCSD)

Kimberly Prather (Distinguished Chair in Atmospheric Chemistry, PhD, UCSD)

Kit Pogliano (Dean, Division of Biological Sciences, PhD, UCSD)

Jennifer MacKinnon (Professor, SIO, PhD, SDUSD parent, UCSD)

Rebecca Fielding-Miller (Assistant Professor, Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity, MSPH PhD, UCSD)

Steffanie Strathdee (Harold Simon Professor of Medicine, Associate Dean of Global Health Sciences, PhD, UCSD)

Thomas Patterson (Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry, PhD, UCSD)

Helen Amanda Fricker (Professor, SIO, PhD, SDUSD parent, UCSD)

Matthew Alford (Professor, SIO, PhD, SDUSD parent, UCSD)

Ian Eisenman ((Professor, SIO, PhD, SDUSD parent, UCSD)

Fiamma Straneo (Professor, PhD, SDUSD parent, UCSD)

**Supplemental Information:**

<https://tinyurl.com/FAQ-aerosols> (FAQ on Protecting Yourself from COVID-19 Aerosol Transmission)

Type and level of group activity	Low occupancy			High occupancy		
	Outdoors and well ventilated	Indoors and well ventilated	Poorly ventilated	Outdoors and well ventilated	Indoors and well ventilated	Poorly ventilated
<b>Wearing face coverings, contact for short time</b>						
Silent	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Speaking	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Shouting, singing	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
<b>Wearing face coverings, contact for prolonged time</b>						
Silent	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	High
Speaking	Low	* Low	Medium	* Medium	Medium	High
Shouting, singing	Low	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
<b>No face coverings, contact for short time</b>						
Silent	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
Speaking	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High
Shouting, singing	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	High
<b>No face coverings, contact for prolonged time</b>						
Silent	Low	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
Speaking	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	High
Shouting, singing	Medium	High	High	High	High	High

**Risk of transmission**  
 Low ■ Medium ■ High ■

\* Borderline case that is highly dependent on quantitative definitions of distancing, number of individuals, and time of exposure

<https://www.bmj.com/content/370/bmj.m3223?fbclid=IwAR1R67KQfhVt3LOrZesmgFc9GSOVxqhjeoap-aDapU8pjvylXMyrC8ilZPE>