March 25, 2020

Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California

1303 10th St., Suite 1173

Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

The Del Norte Healthcare District and the Del Norte County Public Health Officer appreciate your leadership to help contain the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Your stay at home order is an important element of disease containment. However, we understand your order does not apply to inmate transfers within the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (“CDCR”). Thus, CDCR is currently transferring patients into Pelican Bay State Prison (“PBSP”).

To date, Del Norte County has had no confirmed cases of COVID-19. Although PBSP officials are attempting to quarantine inmates arriving at PBSP, there is no quarantine of either inmates or correctional officers during the transfer. This practice places inmates, correctional officers and our community at risk. **Thus, we ask you to issue an executive order to stop the transfer of inmates in to PBSP.**

Del Norte County is uniquely vulnerable to COVID-19. Our region is a federally designated Health Professional Shortage Area, served by a single small hospital located 90 minutes over mountain roads to the next closest hospital. The Del Norte County Public Health Officer confirmed hospital staffing may be unable to meet surge capacity in the event of a coronavirus outbreak.

Hospital patients in need of higher care are typically transferred via air ambulance, but the local air ambulance provider is not equipped to transfer COVID-19 patients. Thus, a COVID-19 outbreak at PBSP could quickly overwhelm our local healthcare resources while interfering with patient transfers to outside facilities.

We understand the California Department of Corrections seeks flexibility in housing inmates. But the consequences of a COVID-19 outbreak in an isolated, medically underserved community are dire.

Local CDC officials have been unable to halt inmate transfers into PBSP. Thus, we seek your prompt intervention to suspend the transfer of inmates to Pelican Bay State Prison from facilities outside Del Norte County.

Please contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

Kevin Caldwell, M.D.

Chair, Del Norte Healthcare District

Warren Rehwaldt, M.D.

Public Health Officer, Del Norte County

Cc: Ralph Diaz, Secretary, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 1515 S St #101n, Sacramento, CA 95811

Cc: Gerry Hemmingsen, Chair, Del Norte County Board of Supervisors

Cc: Blake Inscore, Mayor, Crescent City

Cc: Joseph Fick, M.D., Chief Medical Executive, CDCR, Vacaville, CA