

## DEL NORTE HEALTHCARE DISTRICT

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May 14, 2020

Del Norte County Board of Supervisors  
Attn: Clerk of the Board  
981 H Street  
Crescent City, CA. 95531

Re: Public Comment on Possible Letter of Support for Public Health Officer's CDPH Covid-19 Variance Attestation to Stage 2 Roadmap to Modify the Stay at Home Order.

Honorable Chair Hemmingsen and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

This letter is being forwarded to you on the authorization of a motion by the Board of Directors of the Del Norte Healthcare District.

As the staff report before you indicates, many healthcare agencies were provided the attestation narrative which is purportedly attached to the staff report. Our agency was apparently overlooked as a recipient of that narrative. The District was also not included in any discussions regarding the plan to reopen the county. We don't know the completeness of the information that you have before you and whether the Variance Attestation contains the complete responses to the State's questions posited. We only have available what is available to the public in general, which has the text that fits within the box but does not contain the complete responses to the questions. We have unsuccessfully attempted to gain Dr. Rehwaldt's participation in our last meeting so we could be enlightened with the basis of the logic being employed in support of the variance. Furthermore, the District is, we believe, understandably concerned and cautious about the Del Norte County Public Health Officer's proposal to expedite opening the county to short-term travelers for the purpose of importing coronavirus into our community.

Accordingly, this District is of the opinion that the Brown Act's purpose of providing complete information to the public is violated when we are unable to provide the Board with informed public comment based on an incomplete document. This process has been moving very quickly before the Board and, given the virtual manner in which we are now conducting the public's business, we do question whether the public is really informed of the nature and extent of the request being made by the Public Health Officer. In fact, it would concretely appear that if the public is limited to the access that the district has, it could not be so informed.

Our request is that the Board makes the entire variance available, to both the district and to the public, so that we can all make carefully considered and informed public comment. The health of this community is our public charge. This is, of course equally applicable to the Public Health Officer and the Board of Supervisors itself. Thus, we believe that we are all on the same side here and we respectfully request that you delay consideration of this letter of support until the facts are known and the decision is fully transparent. It may well be that the Healthcare District will be fully in accord with the recommendation. Unfortunately, we are not now, and could not be, given the present circumstances, in a position to reach that conclusion.

It goes without restating that Del Norte County is a federally designated Health Professional Shortage Area. It has a very small isolated hospital with inadequate staffing to handle expansion of capacity if a number of patients present with the infection. It serves both Del Norte and Curry Counties. The nearest hospital in California is approximately 90 miles away and does not fit the criteria of testing within 60 miles at the present time. Del Norte County has a large population of seniors who are at higher risk of developing severe Covid-19 disease. Del Norte County is an isolated region with limited emergency patient transport capacity for Covid-19 patients and there is no air ambulance transportation for Covid-19 positive patients to other hospitals.

Residents of Del Norte County, excepting essential business and professionals, have been ordered to shelter in place in order to slow the curve of infection so that healthcare facilities are not overwhelmed by Covid-19 patients pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order N-33-20. We are one of the counties that have been successful in the sacrifices that have been made to keep the number of infected down to a low number.

Additionally, literally billions of dollars are being spent on attempting to scientifically identify both the symptoms and effects of this disease and its treatment. We are still in an early stage of that process but it appears rapid progress is being made.

We recognize that a considerable amount of this community's economy is tourism-related, and that there is a natural impetus to restart our economic engine: however, without the information that this district and the public at large would gain from the complete text of the variance attestation, it initially appears to be a no sequitur to want to open up the population to intentionally induce disease into the population.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Caldwell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish at the end.

Kevin Caldwell MD  
Chair, Del Norte Healthcare District