



May 14, 2020

Susan Wheelan
Public Health Director
El Paso County Public Health
1675 W. Garden of the Gods Road, Suite 2044
Colorado Springs, CO 80907

RE: El Paso County Variance Request from portions of **Executive Order D 20 044** and **Public Health Order 20-28**

Dear Ms. Wheelan:

Thank you for your application to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) requesting a variance to portions of **Executive Order D 20 044 Safer at Home** and **Public Health Order 20-28 Safer at Home**. I have had an opportunity to review your request and consider the information provided, and determine that the request is approved, with some amendments, as explained further below. This variance approval is limited to graduations; in all other respects, the requirements of the Safer at Home Executive Order and Public Health Order remain in effect for El Paso County.

You asked for a variance related to the conduct of graduation events for schools in El Paso County. Your letter addresses particular requirements that you propose as an alternative to the Safer at Home model for each of these areas. The data and information included in your request demonstrates that El Paso has lower rates of COVID-19 cases than many other front range communities, and is currently experiencing a sustained decline.

With respect to the specific terms of the graduation variance request, we agree with the terms you propose and in particular we appreciate your approach of having all school graduation plans reviewed and approved by your agency. We suggest these additional measures be considered during your review to further mitigate the potential spread of disease:

- Students should be encouraged to avoid vulnerable persons for the two weeks following their participation in the graduation ceremony.
- Communication to the students should include a recommendation that they do not participate if a family member is vulnerable.

We further strongly recommend that the El Paso County Public Health observe the first few graduation ceremonies in person to judge whether all requirements are being met.

This variance approval is granted based on the facts and circumstances today as you have described them in your request; however, should circumstances change such that, for example,

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surges in COVID-19 transmission occurs, cases exceed the capacity for El Paso County to fully implement all effective disease control strategies as described in your request, or if resources or COVID-19 prevalence statewide in our opinion requires a different approach, CDPHE reserves the right to modify or rescind this variance approval. This approval is in effect until the final expiration of PHO 20-28, which currently is set to expire on May 26, 2020 but may be extended.

I appreciate your thoughtful approach to these challenging issues, and wish you all the best in your continuing efforts to ensure that El Paso County residents are safe and healthy as we deal with this global pandemic. El Paso County is a valued partner, and we are available to answer any questions and work with you on these matters. Please give me a call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jill Hunsaker Ryan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jill Hunsaker Ryan, MPH
Executive Director