



June 17, 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 **Public Health Order 20-28**

Dear Director Wheelan:

I am following up with you concerning your third application to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) for a variance to portions of **Public Health Order 20-28 Safer at Home**. I have had an opportunity to re-review your request for a variance regarding houses of worship, and find based upon review of current data and information that El Paso county now meets the “low” level in the variance framework, as described below. This reassessment results in approval of your request at the low level for houses of worship. We continue to work with you on the variance request to further open the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, but are not addressing that portion of the request at this time.

As stated in Appendix G to PHO 20-28, when reviewing a variance request, we evaluate the current prevalence of COVID-19 in the jurisdiction, including whether cases are increasing, stable, or decreasing. In reviewing El Paso County’s current status with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, we note that the county has had 1,941 cases to date. Excluding cases among residents in facilities experiencing outbreaks, 177 of those cases occurred in the last two weeks, which is a two week incidence of 25 per 100,000 and qualifies for the “low” level in the [variance framework](#). Your application describes a robust public health system with continuing collaboration with community partners to ensure that testing capacity, epidemiological response, PPE resources, and healthcare infrastructure remain stable and sufficient to meet community needs.

Your application specifically seeks a variance from the Safer at Home provisions concerning houses of worship. We have reviewed your proposal and approve the requirements outlined in your application, with the following additional requirements that must be met:

- In order to achieve 6 feet distancing the limit is 50% of the posted occupancy code limit ensuring a minimum 28 square feet per person not to exceed more than 175 people gathered in a confined indoor space at any given time, and not to exceed 250 in an outdoor space.

El Paso County Variance
June 17, 2020

This variance approval is granted based on the facts and circumstances today as you have described them in your request, and is subject to adjustment if conditions worsen as described [here](#). El Paso County is in the “low” level of viral spread at the time of this approval. If the county reports that more than 178 cases in a two week period (2 week incidence of 25 per 100,000) have occurred, notify CDPHE and then implement a mitigation plan for 2 weeks to try and restore virus transmission levels to the baseline under which the variance was approved. If after 2 weeks the levels are not restored, then the capacity limits are automatically adjusted to the maximum of the new level (low goes to medium, medium goes to high). Additionally, CDPHE reserves the right to modify or rescind this variance approval as circumstances warrant. This approval is in effect until the final expiration of PHO 20-28, which will be extended in some capacity beyond the current expiration date of June 30, 2020.

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