



JEFF GOLDEN
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 3

OREGON STATE SENATE

May 27, 2021

The Honorable Kate Brown, Governor of the State of Oregon
Oregon State Capitol

Dear Governor Brown,

I write to reinforce concerns expressed by the Jackson County Board of Commissioners in its May 25 letter to you. They describe the difficult position in which many businesses find themselves as they strive to comply with recent guidance on COVID vaccinations and masking precautions.

I appreciate the intention of this guidance, which seems to be a sincere effort to provide businesses with options as they advance towards full re-opening. It also seems clear that efforts to implement them have turned out to be much more problematic than envisioned. I am sure you've become well aware of, and can understand, the practical difficulties of delegating vaccination verification duties to business employees who generally have no relevant training. And blanket masking requirements at this particular moment, when more and more people are frustrated by ongoing restrictions after they've been fully vaccinated, are generating a level of conflict that adds one more challenge for business communities already deeply challenged by the pandemic. The letter from the Jackson County Board describes the dilemma well.

I've frequently reflected on how hard it must be to make the calls on COVID management policy. Scientific uncertainty on critical points makes a perfect course impossible; weighing the preponderance of information, learning from the experience of other states, and discerning course correction along the way is the best that any of us can ask for. With that in mind, I ask you to review the current guidance with an eye toward course correction of this element in the very near future. If I understand recent information correctly, Oregon is projected to reach vaccination levels that would allow essentially unrestricted re-opening by mid-June. If we fall short of that goal, I suggest that we align with fourteen other states that require masks in specified areas for unvaccinated people only, but rely on an honor system rather than attempts at inevitably-flawed screening and enforcement.

I understand that there are drawbacks to that option; there are, to the best of my knowledge, with every option that has been suggested in this context. Repeated conversations with business owners and employees have persuaded me that it would be, on balance, a better option going forward than the status quo.

Thank you for your consideration of my perspective, and for your persistence in making difficult, often thankless, decisions based on your informed deliberation and shaped by your determination to keep Oregonians safe.

Respectfully,

Jeff Golden, Senate District 3

Cc: Pat Allen, OHA Director
Elana Pirtle-Guiney, Governor's Legislative Director