

Governor’s Strike Force to Open Texas

% Alonzo Cantu

McAllen, Texas

Re: Regional Proposal to Open Texas

Dear Mr. Cantu,

Enclosed with this letter, you will find a proposed phased matrix for the safe restarting of the local economy. In drafting this plan, significant consideration was given to local epidemiological information to continued COVID-19 containment and mitigation. This matrix is formulated to conform to the White House Guidelines for Opening Up America Again, and current CDC guidelines and best practices recommendations. This plan outline was developed in cooperation with public health officials, City and County officials, and members of the private sector economy.

As a preliminary matter, the guidelines consider that the first reported COVID-19 case was not present in Hidalgo County until March 21, 2020, both several weeks after the national commencement of virus spread, and additionally after significant maturation of guidelines for virus containment and mitigation. These factors, along with the natural spreading of local community members is a substantial consideration in the determination Phase I initiation as a matter of fact, and in the fluid movement between Phases.

In assessing the gatekeeping criteria for progression beyond Phase I and regressing, should that unlikely event arise, local leaders are encouraged to evaluate relevant local epidemiological information related to positive COVID 19 tests and recovered cases. After doing so, phases should advance when trends reflect increased virus recovery and should revert with trends indicate increased positive COVID-19 tests beyond that which can be attributed to conditional awareness resulting from increased and enhanced testing availability. Actual numbers to be acted upon are yet to be determined, and during early implementation should be based upon close consultation between local political leaders and public health officials. Additional consideration in moving between phases should account for local hospital capacity to treat all patients without a crisis in care.

Phase I contemplates a continuation of the general state of recommended social separation and travel for only essential purposes. This phase considers that the scope of essential services will expand to include increased curbside retail with employee protections to be formulated by individual employers based upon accepted national, state, and local public health recommendations for social separation, and sanitary working conditions. As a local community moves through each phase of the matrix to a "new normal" recommendations are made for the gradual integration of society and commerce, while loosening isolation recommendations, but always recommending cautions which can easily be modified upon identification of increased disease activity. The proposed phasing can also be advanced or rescinded by specific localities as isolated hot spots emerge and are subsequently contained.

Particular recommendations for various sectors of commerce and community are detailed in the matrix following the overarching public health considerations.

Sincerely,



Kevin D. Pagan

City Attorney / Emergency Management Coordinator

City of McAllen, Texas