



# BOARD OF YAKIMA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Amanda McKinney  
District 1

Ron Anderson  
District 2

LaDon Linde  
District 3

May 4, 2021

The Honorable Jay Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee,

Over the past year, we have all collectively had to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as its secondary effects, including the effects of emergency orders. It is doubtless these orders have certainly protected the lives and health of many Washingtonians from COVID-19. However, it is also clear to see in retrospect that some of the orders themselves have caused real harm. This could be a very long list, but some of the negative effects include:

- The loss of businesses and livelihoods
- The reluctance of some to receive proper medical treatment due to fear of COVID, leading to deteriorating health and loss of life for non-COVID ailments
- Increases in mental health issues in young and old, including anxiety, depression, and drug overdoses
- The inability of most of our school children to advance academically in a meaningful way
- Restrictions on rights of worship and assembly

While the COVID pandemic is real and needed to be addressed, some perspective is also needed. For the year of 2020, COVID was actually the **third-leading cause of death** in the United States, trailing both cancer and heart disease. We do not shut down our society to deal with these diseases.

Therefore, we are submitting our comments and concerns about the future guidelines for Yakima County, and for each county in Washington State. It must be acknowledged and accepted that we are not trying to eradicate this virus from the face of the earth, nor could we do so if we wanted to. While the guidelines you set in the beginning stages of this pandemic have fulfilled their purpose, it is, in our view, time to declare the emergency over and remove *all* criteria that was set forth under the phases and allow each county to independently manage their own health issues involving covid without concern of being set back due to some artificial numbers. Department of Health guidelines need to be recommendations, not state law.



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Yakima County and likewise all Washington communities are in a management mode and will continue to be so until the maximum level of vaccines have been distributed and administered to those wanting them. We urge you to allow counties to educate and work with our local resources and residents while also allowing all Washingtonians to use their own judgment and make choices for their own health and well-being.

We urge you to end the statewide emergency orders which have hindered the individual and communal freedoms of the residents of Yakima County and Washington State for well over one year. Your rationale for taking control by emergency orders was to ensure everyone followed severely prohibitive measures to slow the spread of the virus to keep our hospitals from being overrun until we had a vaccine readily available. We have achieved these expressed goals. Between the vaccines received and the natural immunity acquired through exposure, we are in a much better place than we were even four months ago.

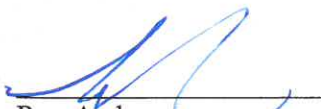
The People must be allowed to make choices that you disagree with. The People must be allowed to make choices a Public Health official disagrees with. We cannot be governed according to the views of those among us who are most risk adverse. The public is tired of this approach, and is pushing back hard, as I am sure you are well aware.


Our reality is that millions of U.S. Citizens and hundreds of thousands of Washingtonians will choose not to get the COVID vaccine. Although we can educate and encourage them to be vaccinated, that is their choice. The people who want the protection of the vaccine now have access to a free and readily available supply. That is the very best that Government can provide: The Choice.

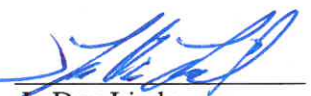
COVID19 will continue to spread in Washington state and across the globe. Some people will have long-term impacts to their health. Some will sadly perish. This is true not only of COVID, but a myriad of other diseases, ailments, and accidents that impact our citizens every day. It is a chance and choice we must allow them to make. Our People must be allowed to choose how they go on living in a world where COVID19 and its inevitable variants are always with us. While this occurs, we trust that science can meet this challenge as we move forward.

We remain a people with a God-given right to choose Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness: at our own risk. This is what makes our country unique, and why many people around the world still dream of becoming Americans one day.

Sincerely,

  
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Ron Anderson  
Chairman of the Board  
Commissioner, District 2

  
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Amanda McKinney  
Commissioner, District 1

  
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LaDon Linde  
Commissioner, District 3