March 27, 2020

The Honorable Michael Parson
Governor
State of Missouri
PO Box 720
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Dear Governor Parson:

I am writing to you on behalf of the more than 300 members of the Missouri Public Health Association (MPHA) regarding the need to protect the health of the residents of our state during the current public health challenge associated with COVID-19. Since 1925, the MPHA has served as the largest public health organization in the State and represents physicians, nurses, local health directors, environmental sanitarians, epidemiologists, among many other disciplines concerned about the health of our communities.

I am hereby requesting that you act affirmatively to help contain and mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Many communities in our state have taken action to reduce the risk as you have, but MPHA encourages you to move your containment efforts forward by declaring a state of emergency and thereby enact a statewide stay-at-home policy and order all Missourians to shelter in place to help us slow the spread of this virus in Missouri. Your effort in that regard will clearly limit the wave of infections that will soon be upon us and also protect our critically needed health care workers already stretched to their limits.

As part of a stay-at-home policy, it would allow very few retail businesses to operate. These would include grocery stores, pharmacies and automobile filling stations. Only limited other businesses, those with no direct physical contact of less than 6 feet, would be permitted to operate, and then only on a drive through or curbside service basis.

Similarly, MPHA recommends that all schools in the state be closed for an undetermined time, pending the flattening of this wave of the pandemic. It is expected that this could be as long as the remainder of the school year.

It is becoming increasingly clear that communities in our nation and around the country that have adopted many of these actions are initially seeing some mitigation of the effects of the virus and providing protection of the vulnerable segments of our population.
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MPHA thanks you for your considerable efforts to date, but encourages even stronger, more affirmative action to achieve the mission of our State depicted above the entrance to our Capitol building in Jefferson City, Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto, i.e., the Health of the People is the Supreme Law.

With kind regards,

Andrew Warlen, M.P.H.,
President

cc: Randall Williams, M.D., M.P.H.
    MPHA Board of Directors