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Assembly California Legislature



DR. JOAQUIN ARAMBULA
ASSEMBLY MEMBER, THIRTY-FIRST DISTRICT

COMMITTEES
CHAIR: BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 1 ON
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
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BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS
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JOINT COMMITTEE
LEGISLATIVE BUDGET

July 15, 2020

To the Fresno County Board of Supervisors:

In recent weeks, as our region and state have seen an alarming increase in COVID-19 cases, I have met with concerned leaders and community members, including essential workers who pick our crops, toil in our packing houses, and undertake other jobs needed to keep our economy going during this pandemic.

As a doctor, I came away with one disturbing, singular message: we all need to address the current situation with more urgency. Therefore, I am asking for an emergency meeting to discuss what measures we can consider and take to be more effective in meeting this unprecedented challenge.

I appreciate that you designated \$5 million of federal CARES Act funds to help small businesses through this crisis, and that some other funds were allocated to the Fresno County Department of Public Health, which is doing everything it can to fight this dangerous virus.

Together, we can do more.

It would be helpful to understand how the balance of the \$81.5 million in CARES funds are being allocated. Testing? Contact tracing? Safety equipment for essential workers? I am particularly worried about those who work high-risk indoor jobs and cannot physically distance themselves from their co-workers.

I've also learned that the county is close to using the alternate care site at the Exhibit Hall in Fresno to handle the surge in patients. I would like to learn more. We also know many essential workers – mostly Latino and other minorities – must keep working to feed their families. If they fall victim to the virus, many are not aware that they can access health care to treat the illness, despite not having health insurance.

I think we all agree that when people have factual information we can all make better personal and leadership decisions. I learned about the outbreak at the Harris Ranch Beef Company slaughterhouse and meat packing facility in Selma only because Tulare County has a transparency policy on workplace-related infections, and that generated a small news story. Fresno County should be committed to transparency and being inclusive so that the public has confidence that elected officials are making decisions in the best interest of all people.

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COVID-19 has cast an ugly spotlight on the inequities faced by our most disadvantaged communities. As a doctor, it pains me that people are suffering at a time when leadership and clear direction can save lives and slow the spread of this vicious virus.

My office and I stand ready to assist you in looking at what other counties have implemented to fight COVID-19. Let's identify the best practices and put them to work in Fresno County. I have copied this letter to a number of organizations that I work with and can help us identify best practices that we can review together.

We can meet this moment together. I'm ready to begin.

Sincerely,


Dr. Joaquin Arambula
Assemblymember, 31st District

CC:

Dr. Rais Vohra, Health Officer
Building Healthy Communities
Centro La Familia
Central Valley Health Policy Institute
California Farmworker Foundation
Central Valley Immigrant Integration
Collaborative
Assembly District 31 City Mayors
Western Center for Law and Poverty
California Health +Advocates
California Hospital Association
Clínica Sierra Vista
Jakara Movement
Fresno Barrios Unidos
Youth Leadership Institute
Health Access
Faith in the Valley

David Pomaville, Public Health Director
United Health Centers
Valley Health Team
Adventist Health
Community Regional Medical Centers
Saint Agnes Medical Center
Kaiser Permanente Fresno
California Medical Association
Fresno-Madera Medical Society
Leadership Council for Justice and
Accountability
Asian Business Institute & Resource Center
Kaiser Family Foundation
California Endowment
Sierra Health Foundation
California Immigrant Policy Center
Planned Parenthood
Central Valley Community Foundation

