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President and CEO
Regional West Health Services
4021 Avenue B | Scottsbluff, NE 69361 | RWHS.org

November 12, 2020

Raymond Gonzales, Mayor, City of Scottsbluff; Tony Kaufman, Mayor, City of Gering; Ken Meyer, Commissioner Chairman Scotts Bluff County Nebraska; Chris Perales, Mayor, Village of Terrytown

Dear Mayors Gonzales, Kaufman, Perales and Commissioner Chairman Meyer:

Scotts Bluff County, Western Nebraska and our great State are experiencing a significant public healthcare crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, Covid-19 will continue until all of our communities actively engages to help slow the spread of the virus. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is supported by numerous recent and ongoing scientific studies that demonstrate an effective way to slow the spread of this devastating virus including smaller gatherings, social distancing, frequent handwashing and masking. Masking is a critical component to help slow the spread of this virus and help keep the economy of our region open.

Scotts Bluff County received national attention recently when we attained one of the highest per capita positive new Covid-19 incident rates. During the middle of October and through the first part of November to date, Scotts Bluff County and our region has a significant increase in positive Covid-19 cases and also an increase in Covid-19 related deaths. These statistics are alarming and it will take engagement from everyone in our communities to help inhibit the transmission of the virus.

Covid-19 has gained momentum in our Western Nebraska region and hospitals are becoming overwhelmed with patients acquiring Covid-19 compounded with staff who are ill and unable to work. For our region, with the high volume of Covid-19 patients, healthcare services can be quickly compromised due to limited and strained resources including staff, availability of treatment options and hospital and clinic space for patients to receive care.

Our current condition can make employees fearful to go to work, customers fearful of patronizing businesses and parents fearful of sending their children to school. The economic impact of the pandemic this year has been severe in some cases with the loss of jobs and businesses. The effect will not resolve itself while Covid-19 continues to spread at a rapid rate.

While some organizations, including Regional West, have mandated wearing masks in our buildings, a significant impact may not be achieved unless all persons in our county and cities wear masks in public until such a time as we are able to slow the disease spread back under control. Other communities across the country have demonstrated this activity is successful to slow the spread of Covid-19.

Regional West Health Services recognizes the authority and responsibility of declaring a health emergency in each of your cities and the county falls to the elected officials. This may be an extremely difficult decision to issue mandatory masking or stay at home orders to support restrictions to flatten the Covid-19 spread curve. When comparing this to the possibility of paralyzing our communities, businesses and healthcare services, it would be an immediate effective step to help protect all of us in Scotts Bluff County.

On behalf of Regional West, our Board of Directors, Leadership and Medical Staff Leadership we request the highest consideration for requiring and enforcing the CDC guidelines for everyone, to include masking, as the best approach to impede the surge of positive Covid-19 cases in our local area as soon as possible.

We are appreciative for your consideration of this life saving action for the people in our communities.

Sincerely,


John Mentgen FACHE
President and CEO, RWHS


Dr. Mathew Bruner FACOG
Chief Medical Officer, RWHS