

February 18, 2021

The Honorable Doug Ducey
Governor of Arizona
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Dear Governor Ducey,

As you know, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in partnership with the Department of Education (ED) released new COVID-19 K-12 school operational guidance.¹ I am seeking information about what actions you plan to take to address the high transmission rate of COVID-19 in communities, so that we can get our children back to in person learning as soon as possible.

The CDC school guidance states, in part:

“To enable schools to open safely and remain open, it is important to adopt and consistently implement actions to slow the spread of SARS-CoV-2 both in schools and in the community.... In short, success in preventing the introduction and subsequent transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in schools is connected to and facilitated by preventing transmission in the broader community.”

The CDC provides two indicators to measure community transmission for consideration and implementation of school mitigation strategies:

“...the use of two measures of community burden to determine the level of risk of transmission: total number of new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days; and percentage of nucleic acid amplification test (NAATs) results that are positive during the last 7 days.”

Even with a recent decline in cases in Arizona, all but one county currently falls under the “High Risk Red”, as 7 day averages for new cases are greater than 100 per 100,000 people.² According to this guidance, it is recommended that middle and high schools remain in virtual learning mode, and that elementary schools adopt a hybrid learning mode or reduced attendance.³

¹ Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation. Feb. 12, 2021
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html>

² COVID-19 Integrated County View. Feb. 16, 2021. <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

³ Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation. Feb. 12, 2021
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html>

Despite reporting the highest rate of new coronavirus cases in the United States, leading in hospitalizations, and reporting above average death rates, the state has resisted necessary mitigation steps.⁴ Arizona health leaders have repeatedly urged you implement proven mitigation measures such as a statewide mask mandate and stricter prohibition on indoor gatherings. And while the state has refused to implement various approaches to stem the spread of this virus, the children of Arizona have suffered as many schools have been forced to continue distance learning modes.

I am confident we agree that students across the state need to return to in-person learning in the safest possible environment. The newly released K-12 guidance from the CDC is based on the best available scientific evidence to provide a roadmap for protecting teachers, staff, and our children. Beyond vaccination efforts, I would like information regarding what additional actions you plan to take to move our counties into lower transmission categories so that schools can *safely* return to in-person learning.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raúl M. Grijalva". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

⁴ COVID-19 Integrated County View. Feb. 16, 2021. <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>