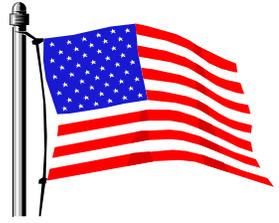


**THE BOROUGH OF RIDGWAY**  
108 Main St, P.O. Box 149, Ridgway, PA 15853  
(814)776-1125  
Fax: (814)772-5167  
Email: [curdy@windstream.net](mailto:curdy@windstream.net)



May 14, 2020

Dear Governor Wolf:

As elected officials serving the people of Elk and surrounding counties, we are writing to seek detailed metrics about how our communities can transition from the “yellow” to the “green” designation in your Process to Reopen Pennsylvania.

Elk County and others in our region were in the first wave of counties to qualify for the yellow designation. As you have repeatedly argued, transitioning to more open designations has to be based on data and science, and our numbers supported a loosening of restrictions. In fact, our numbers continue to bear examination.

For instance, your plan indicates that counties must have fewer than 50 new cases per 100,000 population over 14 days. In Elk County, we have had five cases total through the entire pandemic, and two new cases the past 14 days. Adjusted per 100,000 population, this puts Elk County at 6 new cases per 100,000 population, or less than 1/8 the maximum number of cases allowed before transitioning from red to yellow.

Similar numbers prevail across the region. In the six counties that make up the North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission, we have seen approximately 24 cases over the past two weeks. That is across a combined population of 225,000. Again, you can see that the cases per 100,000 population are barely 1/10 the limit set for the transition from red to yellow.

As of this writing, we are not aware of any active cases in Elk County and several of the other counties.

Our citizens continue to willingly make sacrifices for the greater good and follow your guidance. They ask us, as their local representatives, what is preventing us from further transitioning to the green phase. Today we have no answers for them. We seek guidance about what those other metrics are so we can commit our scarce resources to meeting them. We want to have a collaborative discussion with you and your team regarding how we can get to green.

You asked citizens to help “flatten the curve” to preserve healthcare capacity. We have achieved this goal in across our region. The Penn Highlands Healthcare system and our local UPMC affiliates have been great community partners. No local hospital was stressed with COVID-19 patients. In fact, we may have been too successful in our efforts as local hospital volumes have been down 40 percent, prompting Penn Highlands to recently furlough 600 workers across their network. Beyond our immediate area, almost all of our tertiary and quaternary patients get transferred to UPMC hospitals in Pittsburgh, Erie and Altoona. UPMC officials have recently stated that they have more than sufficient capacity to handle this crisis moving forward.

Across our region, our citizens worry that failing to reopen the economy soon will threaten the long-term viability of our hospitals. This would be a devastating outcome for a strategy aimed at preserving our health system. We live in a rural area, and any sustained loss of healthcare capacity would cost lives as people would be forced to travel long distances for emergency care.

Again, we want to emphasize that this letter is offered in the spirit of collaboration. We understand the enormous stress that you are under to guide the Commonwealth through this crisis. We have done our part to support your efforts and foster a spirit of cooperation. We also understand that some communities have made statements about “going rogue” and refusing to support your plan to reopen the state safely. Please do not mistake our efforts for those.

At the same time, at a press conference on Monday, May 11 you and your administration “*have not yet set a timeline even for those counties moving from red to yellow, let alone move from yellow to green.*” A statement like this gives us pause and causes concern. The heart of any strategic plan is a key set of metrics that show which data matter and allow us to establish

aggressive targets. It would allow us to understand where we have succeeded and where we need to make more progress.

Indeed, we believe that using our success and our strong local metrics could indicate to others that progress is possible. We have done things the right way. We have gotten results. We also have certain characteristics working in our favor. Low population density, little public transit, an industrial economic base that lends itself to social distancing in many of our major employers. We have built relationships across our rural communities and throughout the region to share knowledge and best practices to ensure our companies have resources that they may not be able to obtain individually.

Conversely, we fear that failing to delineate a path forward in light of these characteristics could spread pessimism through the state. If getting to less than 1/8 of the cases allowed under “yellow” does not qualify us to go to green, what would? If there are other data holding us back, our communities have the right to know what they are to help guide our efforts moving forward.

We would welcome a visit from you and your team to see how we are appropriately answering your call to respond to this COVID-19 epidemic. We do not want this visit to delay any further work, however, so we ask you to share your metrics with us immediately so we can continue on our journey to safely and responsibly open our economy.

If you desire more information about our request, please do not hesitate to contact any one of the undersigned below.

Sam MacDonald  
President, Ridgway  
Borough Council

Lou Radkowski  
Mayor, City of  
Saint Marys

Alfred J. Maletto III  
President, Johnsonburg  
Borough Council

Joe Dagher  
Commissioner  
Elk County

M. Fritz Lecker  
Commissioner  
Elk County

Matthew Quesenberry  
Commissioner  
Elk County