



STATE OF GEORGIA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ATLANTA 30334-0900

Brian P. Kemp  
GOVERNOR

August 12, 2020

The Honorable James Clyburn  
Chairman, Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Clyburn,

These are difficult times in our state and country. COVID-19 has threatened the health and well-being of our families and communities. This global pandemic has generated economic hardship that has undermined our economic prosperity. In Georgia, we are working around the clock to stop the spread of this dangerous virus while safeguarding jobs, economic opportunity, and investment. This is a war on two fronts, and we are fighting every day to protect the lives—and the livelihoods—of all Georgians.

From the very beginning, we have used data, science, and the advice of public health officials like Department of Public Health Commissioner Dr. Kathleen Toomey to craft our approach to combatting COVID-19. We launched our Coronavirus Task Force in late February and had our first positive cases in Georgia days later. We took immediate steps to flatten the curve, protect the most vulnerable, and save lives in every corner of our state.

With favorable data and positive trendlines, Georgia reopened the shuttered parts of our economy in late April and early May. We extended shelter in place orders for the medically fragile and provided strict safety guidelines for businesses. Despite criticism in the media, our decisions proved to be the right ones. We saw cases, hospitalizations, and mortality rates flatten in May and early June. Georgia was ultimately applauded for a measured reopening that balanced public health and economic stability.

In Georgia, and throughout the country, many grew complacent. Summer holidays coupled with televised protests caused many to let their guard down and abandon guidance provided by public health officials. As cases started to rise again, the public health emergency was extended in July and additional reopening measures were paused. Our ban on gatherings remained in place, and I travelled the state with the U.S. Surgeon General to encourage Georgians to do four things: wear a mask, practice social distancing, wash their hands, and heed guidance outlined in our executive orders.

As cases began to reach new heights in mid-July, we began shipping millions of masks to communities throughout the Peach State. I worked with state leaders and hospital administrators to roll out our hospital surge capacity plan, which includes a makeshift hospital at the Georgia World Congress Center, and we dramatically ramped up COVID-19 testing. Weeks later, we started to see encouraging progress. Clearly, Georgians did their part to stop the spread.

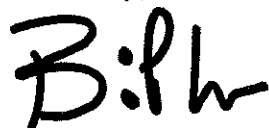
Now, as I write this response to your letter, Georgia continues to see favorable data in the fight against COVID-19. Georgia's hospitalizations are down by 10% over the past ten days with capacity at Piedmont Atlanta Hospital's Marcus Tower and the Georgia World Congress Center. The curve has flattened on the number of new cases in Georgia, and the positivity rate continues to fall. Our state's Rt has dropped to .92, which is the sixth lowest state in the country, and the Department of Community Health recently finished onsite infection control surveys of every certified nursing home in Georgia.

Since July 1, Georgia has dramatically ramped up testing with 20,000 more tests per day and opened a mega testing site in College Park, which will add another 5,000 tests to our daily capacity. As local officials decide to open schools, state officials continue to deliver masks, hand sanitizer, foggers, and PPE to communities so school superintendents and boards can provide the necessary resources and tools to keep teachers and students safe.

Throughout this entire battle against COVID-19, we have worked closely with the White House and Coronavirus Task Force. The level of coordination is unmatched in our state's history. I am grateful for the President and Vice President's leadership during these challenging days. They have provided every asset needed to weather this storm and emerge victorious. Without question, we value their partnership during this pandemic.

Over the last several months, many have tried to exploit this pivotal moment for personal or political gain. Frankly, it is sad and disappointing. People are dying, businesses are hurting, and most Americans are concerned about what the future holds. Now is not the time for petty games or hidden agendas. We must set our differences aside and work together to overcome the challenges before us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. Kemp". The letters are stylized and cursive.

Brian P. Kemp  
Governor of Georgia

cc: The Honorable Steve Scalise  
Ranking Member, Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis