

# THE SENATE OF TEXAS

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SENATOR  
EDDIE LUCIO, JR.

June 25, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott  
Governor, State of Texas State  
Capitol, 2S.1  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Governor Abbott:

I write to you on behalf of constituents that we represent and respectfully urge you to strengthen the state's resolve to protect our constituents from COVID-19. With a sense of urgency, on behalf of the good people of Senate District 27, I respectfully ask you to immediately direct our state to make meaningful steps to increase our local ability to curtail the spread of the deadly corona virus.

Our local health authorities are jointly working on a daily basis on the frontlines with local health officials and their mayors and county judges to help keep our communities safe and healthy. It is irrefutable that they are best situated in knowing the severity and vigor the spread the public health threat is causing in their communities. For the sake of our constituents and families in our state, I respectfully request that you provide those in the frontlines who are fighting this life-altering virus greater resources and increased authority. It is our local officials -- our local health authorities and local health departments, along with their mayors and county judges -- who can best decide how to tailor the local response to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in their local communities. As public servants, I hope that we see eye to eye that in order to protect the lives of our local constituency, our state government in Austin should strengthen their ability, rather than restrain it. Accordingly, I join Hidalgo County Judge Richard Cortez and Cameron County Judge Eddie Treviño -- along with our local mayors -- in conveying the urgent need for local control in our community's response to the ongoing public health crisis. Again, our local governments need to be able to exercise the local authority that our Texas statutes provide them to protect and save lives in communities within their jurisdiction.

I trust that you agree that the State of Texas, as a joint partner in battling this horrible illness, can greatly support their local control efforts by furthering the effectiveness of their authority to contain the public health threat by increasing resources to communities where the negative effects of the COVID-19 outbreak is more pronounced, like our Rio Grande Valley. As the Texas Tribune reported today, the Rio Grande Valley "region's unemployment rate in May was 17.1%, well above the statewide rate of 13%." Just four months ago, before the COVID-19 outbreak "the Rio Grande Valley's unemployment rate was 6.5%. The increase since shows how hard the Valley has been hit by the economic collapse caused by the coronavirus pandemic and limits on the U.S.-Mexico border



DISTRICT 27: CAMERON ★ HIDALGO ★ KENEDY ★ KLEBERG ★ WILLACY

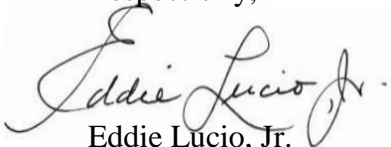
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crossings that fuel its retail industry." State and national news outlets have confirmed that racial and ethnic minorities have disproportionately shouldered the negative consequence of the pandemic. That is why, I specifically ask you to strengthen the availability of state resources that help underserved communities in our state and maximize their ability to contain the virus. As our governor, I respectfully ask you to make available greater personal protection equipment (e.g., masks, gloves, sanitizer, etc.), increased free COVID-19 testing, additional financial assistance, and more resources to communities hardest hit and shouldering the brunt of the pandemic, especially to economically distressed communities and our vulnerable colonias in Rio Grande Valley.

As I have shared with you in the past, our Rio Grande Valley's economy is dependent on cross-border commerce and trade. Clearly, our border, South Texas economy needs a carefully delineated, tailored response by our state. The emerging Hispanic population that we represent is in need for Texas to answer its call for help. Minority communities in our state, especially along our border, need your help in overcoming the pandemic, which has disproportionately affected them the most. For these reasons, I respectfully ask you to provide targeted assistance to our Rio Grande Valley communities and strengthen the state's effort to assist them in keeping our families safe from the public health threat.

I thank you in advanced for your ongoing attention to the needs of the constituents that we represent. I look forward to working with you and your office to address the needs of our communities and to provide the specialized attention underserved regions of our state rightfully deserve.

Respectfully,



Eddie Lucio, Jr.  
State Senator, District 27

