

THE SENATE OF TEXAS

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SENATOR EDDIE LUCIO, JR.

September 18, 2020

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

Dear Governor Abbott:

Thank you for updating our constituents with the latest on Texas' response to the COVID-19 pandemic during yesterday's press conference. It is good to hear that 19 Hospital Regions have been so successful in containing the spread of the coronavirus that you are loosening COVID-restrictions within their jurisdictions. As a public servant who has consistently fought for the creation, retention, and expansion of businesses in Texas, I am glad to know that the capacity, robust health infrastructure, and efforts of these regions are allowing businesses to open with an increased capacity of 75%. This is great news for individuals who are in need of income and work to provide for their families.

I write to you today because the Rio Grande Valley is part of the three hospital regions *"in the danger zone"* and reiterate my request that Valley school districts be granted the waiver they seek to continue to safely educate children through distant learning. Concerned parents and school administrators in my district were thankful to hear their concerns were echoed when you stated, *"the fact is that not all parts of Texas are impacted the same by COVID. A high level of spread in one part of the state may be completely irrelevant to the COVID condition in another part of the state 500 miles away... As a result, the severity of COVID in one region of Texas should not dictate the business practices in some far distant region of the state"*.

Governor, you are wholeheartedly correct that regions of the state that have COVID hospitalizations of more than 15% of all hospitalizations should not have the lessening of COVID restrictions. Regions *"in the danger zone"* should be helped by Texas with stronger prevention restrictions to effectively curtail the spread of this highly contagious disease, and--in turn--save lives. You are right, *"if COVID hospitalizations rise above 15% for seven consecutive days, then course correction is going to be needed. That correction would likely mean that it would require a reduction in the extent to which a region is able to open."*

"The reality is that COVID hasn't suddenly disappeared in Texas...it's still here and it's still a threat" and, because it is more of a threat in the Rio Grande Valley, I seek your help. I implore you to respectfully listen to the outcry of the local school administrators and families we represent. Please direct the Texas Education Agency to grant the Valley's local waiver for it is driven by our local COVID-19 conditions. Granting the waiver will better protect the well-being of our children and it will meet the exact metric you diligently discussed during yesterday's press conference: *"when COVID hospitalizations are high, it means that the spread of COVID is excessive in a particular region and that corrective action is needed... This metric is particularly effective because it distinguishes the severity of COVID between one region of Texas from others."*

With the best interest and welfare of our children, I remain

Eddie Lucio, Jr.

State Senator, District 27



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