



Spokane County

OFFICE OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS

Josh Kerns, 1st District | Mary L. Kuney, 2nd District | Al French, 3rd District

April 21, 2020

Honorable Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 4002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

RE: Restarting the Construction Industry

Dear Honorable Governor Inslee:

As public servants and leaders who are passionate about our work and who tremendously love our community, we find ourselves in challenging times with high stakes. These times demand our greatest effort and the Spokane County Commissioners are grateful for the opportunity to work alongside you as we fight for the people we serve. We write to you today to express our support for you convening six key bipartisan stakeholders from the construction industry and to encourage you to swiftly bring the industry back online upon recommendations from these stakeholders.

Health and safety for workers are our top priorities, without exception. It is our understanding that the workgroup you have convened has brought forth recommendations for sound practices with regard to physical distancing and other important precautions that should be taken at work sites to ensure worker safety. We also join these stakeholders to highlight the importance of the construction industry on our State's economy and its crucial role in helping to solve the shortages of market-rate and affordable housing in many of our communities. In Spokane County, where the rental housing vacancy rate is in the single digits, we are especially attuned to the negative impacts that the lack of housing has on our residents, including housing insecurity and homelessness.

Additionally, we are concerned for small contractors and construction workers as individuals who depend on the industry to provide for their households. As the construction work closure turns from weeks to months, we are fearful for the economic devastation that many in our community may face as they seek relief through the rapidly burdened small business loan or state unemployment benefit systems. Spokane County is using our CDBG money for food security, housing assistance, and utility/energy assistance, but our resources are limited and may be exhausted by the time that all residential and commercial construction activity is allowed to resume.

The fact that you convened six key bipartisan stakeholders to help inform your decision making on how best to restart the construction industry in Washington State is laudable and demonstrates that this issue is truly at the top of your mind during these uncertain times. We hope to see some forward movement on resuming the construction industry soon, with worker safety at the forefront of those plans. Please consider Spokane County a partner to you in this work.

Sincerely,

AL FRENCH, Chair

JOSH KERNS, Vice Chair

MARY L. KUNEY, Commissioner