



STATE OF ARKANSAS

ASA HUTCHINSON
GOVERNOR

November 18, 2020

Dear Physicians in Arkansas,

Thank you for taking the time to write to me and share your professional perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic affecting our State and Nation. Let me first express my gratitude for the selfless service, invaluable leadership, and adaptability that Arkansas healthcare workers, such as yourselves, have demonstrated in the face of these challenging times. You present three measures in your letter, and I appreciate the opportunity to address them.

Since March of this year, my administration, including the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH), has been committed to providing public health guidelines and directives based on the recommendations of our State's public health experts. We have taken aggressive actions to stop the spread of COVID-19 in our communities by limiting our restaurant and business capacity to accommodate for social distancing and proper sanitation. Additional specifics related to these actions are included below.

On March 20, 2020, through Executive Order I authorized ADH to enact a directive prohibiting dine-in service at restaurants and closing bars. On March 23, 2020, this action was followed with a shutdown of gyms, barber shops, cosmetology establishments, body art establishments, massage therapy clinics, and other businesses requiring close contact. Although these businesses have been allowed to resume, each facility must meet requirements as set out by ADH under risk of financial or licensure penalty from the State.

Some of the requirements noted above include measures such as limiting capacity at restaurants and bars to 66% of indoor and outdoor seating and requiring seating arrangements to allow for social distancing. For gyms, patrons are required to maintain 12 feet of distancing while working out or participating in a training session. For barber shops and cosmetology establishments, a minimum six feet of physical distancing is required, and for facilities that can accommodate more than ten

individuals (even with physical distancing), no more than 66% of stations may be utilized.

In addition to authorizing the business restrictions currently in force, on July 16, 2020, I signed Executive Order 20-43, which created a statewide mandate for face coverings when social distancing is not possible. The mandate does provide a penalty up to a \$500 fine after the first warning, and local law enforcement is responsible for the enforcement of this mandate.

Please be assured I share your commitment to slowing the spread of COVID-19 in Arkansas, and I recognize the importance of maintaining our hospital capacity. I will continue to be guided by the expertise and experience of public health officials and evaluate appropriate actions to mitigate the impact on our hospital capacity. Thank you again for your letter and for your dedication to the health and safety of all Arkansans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Asa Hutchinson", with a stylized, sweeping flourish at the end.

Asa Hutchinson