



Washington State Senate

206 Irv Newhouse Building
PO Box 40462
Olympia, WA 98504-0462

Republican Caucus

Phone: (360) 786-7566
FAX: (360) 786-7173

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

April 14, 2020

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor
State of Washington
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: Healthcare clinic closures

Dear Governor Inslee,

First, I would like to thank you for your work to protect the citizens of Washington with respect to COVID-19. But I would like to bring to your attention a disturbing and unacceptable problem within the healthcare industry today.

Your health care proclamation (*No. 20-05, issued March 19*) has some very important unintended consequences affecting patient care today. I have carefully read your proclamation and felt that I had a good understanding of what you intended. I don't disagree with what you wanted to accomplish, however, recent events made me question and research a number of areas in the healthcare field right now.

I received a phone call from a local urologist who was distressed about patients who were experiencing pain as a result of untreated and prolonged conditions. He had people with kidney stones causing them a great deal of pain and suffering. I then contacted Kelly Cooper with the Department of Health to address this issue and my concerns that these patients and other patients with multiple conditions would be treated with pain medications and not with actual procedures that would cure/treat their condition. Her response is included as an attachment to this letter. I then left two voicemails for Drew Shirk. I heard that the topic of my concern came up in a conversation between him and one of my staff, but he never got back to me. While I know he is busy, it would have been a way to start to address the health care challenges occurring around our state.

Coincidentally a few days later, I was scheduled for a doctor's appointment myself. I was told that I could be referred to a Physical Therapist (PT), but not a specialist for my situation. Having been a former medical practice administrator I will say this was very perplexing to me. I asked the doctor why I could see a PT and not a specialist, her response was because of Covid-19 and the Governor's proclamation.

I then reached out to legal staff, Washington State Medical Association (WSMA) and the Washington State Medical Commission about their understanding of the scope of what was being allowed under your proclamation. It was confirmed to me that there is still great confusion about your order and because of the lack of clarity many offices have closed and are not seeing patients at all.

After my conversation with WSMA they provided me with information. Their response is included in "Attachment Two". An important note: There are different Boards and Directors for different medical care groups and not all may have a similar understanding of your intent.

I then reached out to;

- An Ophthalmology clinic; they are closed to all patient encounters.
- A dentist office; limited appointments and hours and they were not sure what restrictions apply to them in different situations,
- An Orthopedic office; they are closed except to those with urgent, emergent situations.

This is my concern: While I understand we must take COVID-19 seriously and that it must be considered the number one health threat to the people of the state of Washington, we must also consider the health of every Washingtonian for all clinical conditions. Closure of clinics for routine care is not acceptable from my perspective nor do I believe it to be your intention under "Proclamation 20-05. However, closure of clinics is the practical result of your order.

The question one should ask "If a patient cannot access the appropriate level of care provider, how will the provider be able to diagnosis and set a treatment plan? How will the provider know if the condition warrants treatment which qualifies under your proclamation?"

I bring this to your attention, not to blame anyone, but to resolve the problems that have arisen from the lack of clarity.

My request is simple, send a clarification statement to providers to include, but not limited to, primary care doctors, specialists, mental health providers, and all providers clarifying that your intent was to ban specific procedures and not to ban general office visits.

We often say, Washington State is the best of the best in the nation in healthcare. We lead in many areas of treatment. Let's encourage providers by allowing them to open their doors and provide the care we often brag about.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical matter. The members signed below join me in urging you to clarify your proclamation.

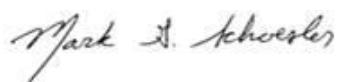
We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Senator Randi Becker

Attachment number one: DOH
Attachment number two: WSMA



Sen. Mark Schoesler



Sen. Lynda Wilson



Sen. Shelly Short



Sen. Ron Muzzall



Sen. Sharon Brown



Sen. Mike Padden



Sen. Jeff Holy



Sen. Keith Wagoner



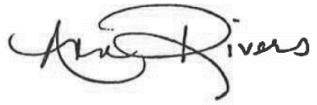
Sen. John Braun



Sen. Jim Honeyford



Sen. Judy Warnick



Sen. Ann Rivers

