



ERIC ALEGRIA, MAYOR  
DAVID L. BRADLEY, MAYOR PRO TEM  
JOHN CRUIKSHANK, COUNCILMEMBER  
KEN DYDA, COUNCILMEMBER  
BARBARA FERRARO, COUNCILMEMBER

December 11, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
1303 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

L.A. County Board of Supervisors  
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

The Honorable Dr. Barbara Ferrer  
L.A. County Public Health Director  
5050 Commerce Drive  
Baldwin Park, CA 91706

**SUBJECT: City of Rancho Palos Verdes – Request to Reopen In-Person Educational Instruction Based on Regional Case Rates**

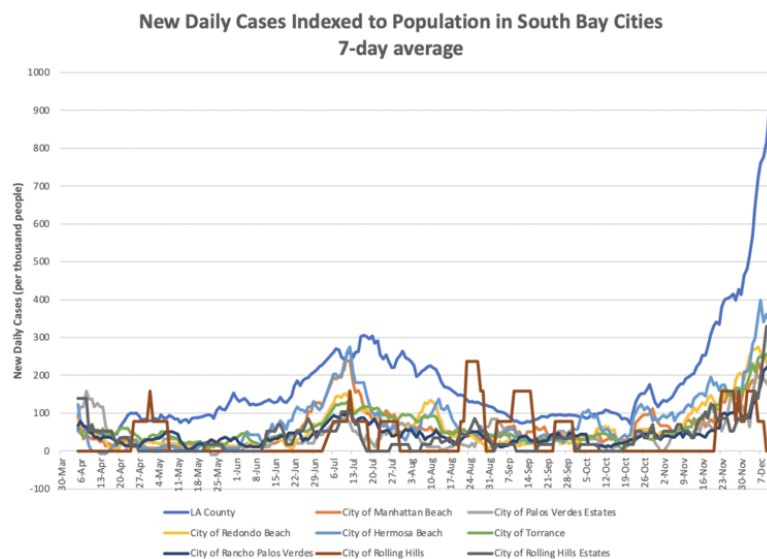
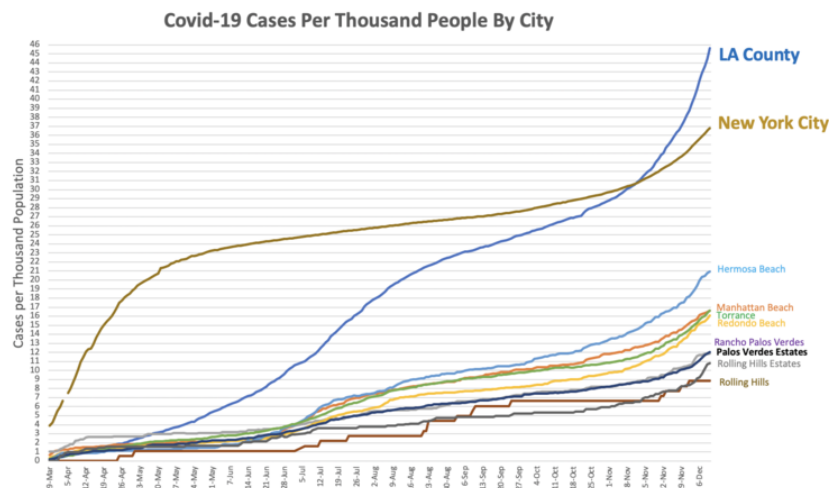
Dear Governor Newsom, Supervisors and Dr. Ferrer:

On behalf of the residents of the City of Rancho Palos Verdes, we are writing to voice our concerns regarding the continued mandate for distance learning instruction. We are extremely concerned about the effects of prolonged distance learning on our children and urge you to expand safe, in-person learning opportunities for our TK-12 students no later than the start of the Spring Semester, January 2021.

We continue to urge the state and county to factor in local transmission data when developing restrictions and reopening plans. We acknowledge and respect the common goal not to overwhelm the healthcare system but stand firmly by the opinion that distance learning orders do not support a long-term approach to the well-being of our collective community. In addition to the expansion of the current waiver process to all TK-12 grades, waivers should be granted based on community case and positivity rates. A regional approach to reopening schools based on case rates will minimize likelihood of exposure to COVID-19.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health recognizes the need for a regional approach to targeting health resources, as listed on its website: "Due to the large size of LA County (4,300 square miles), it has been divided into eight geographic areas (Service Planning Areas ((SPA)). These distinct regions allow the Department of Public Health to develop and **provide more relevant public health and clinical services targeted to the specific health needs of the residents in these different areas.**" We continue to urge the L.A. County Department of Public Health to begin implementing COVID-19 responses by area.

The South Bay region (SPA 8), which includes the City of Rancho Palos Verdes, has consistently had lower case rates than the entire county. It seems unfair to our residents and students, who are reasonably following all mitigation measures, to be "lumped in" with the county as a whole.



While what is occurring in other parts of the country is not justification for action in California, it is interesting to note that New York City, with regional discretion, has reopened elementary schools with heightened health and safety measures. In announcing this decision, New York City Schools Chancellor Richard A. Carranza stated that "getting our kids back in school buildings is one of the single most important things we can do for their wellbeing, and it's so important that we do it right. The unparalleled value of in-person learning for students has been evident in the first few months of school, and we will do everything we can to keep our schools safe and keep them open for the duration of this pandemic." See "Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Carranza Announce Plan to Return to In-Person Learning in New York City Schools," November 29, 2020 at <https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/817-20/mayor-de-blasio-chancellor-carranza-plan-return-in-person-learning-new-york>.

A focused and targeted regional approach can successfully be implemented to safely reopen schools. Additionally, there is little direct scientific evidence linking measured school reopening to increased rates of infection. As such, a more targeted, regional approach to reopening schools and expansion of grades receiving in-person instruction should be explored.

In a survey conducted by our local Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District in May 2020, the main challenge students faced while distance learning was remaining engaged, with over 60% of parents reporting that the amount of live face-to-face virtual instruction was insufficient. Student engagement is key to educational success, and distance learning makes it extremely difficult to achieve the same level of engagement as in-person instruction.

Furthermore, there is a significant student mental health crisis that is being compounded due to the isolating effects of distance learning. Last month, the Clark County School District in Nevada, which has 300,000 students, reported it lost more students to suicide since July than in all of last year. See "School District sees rise in student suicides amid pandemic," November 13, 2020 at <https://lasvegassun.com/news/2020/nov/13/school-district-sees-rise-in-student-suicides-amid/>. Cases of anxiety and depression are also increasing at alarming rates during the COVID-19 pandemic, while parents and families are struggling to help their children.

Our students are needlessly suffering under the distance learning protocols. In order to immediately minimize these effects, we once again request that 1) in-person instruction be expanded to all TK-12 grades no later than the start of the Spring Semester, January 2021 and 2) waivers be granted based on local case and transmission rates in order to ensure that our students, and students throughout the state, have access to quality in-

**Governor Newsom, L.A. County Board of Supervisors and Dr. Ferrer**  
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person education. It's time to get our kids safely back in the classroom and back on track for safe and productive lives.

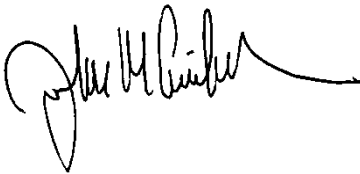
Sincerely,



**Eric Alegria**  
Mayor



**Dave Bradley**  
Mayor Pro Tem



**John Cruikshank**  
Councilmember



**Ken Dyda**  
Councilmember



**Barbara Ferraro**  
Councilmember

cc: Ben Allen, Senator, 26<sup>th</sup> State Senate District  
Al Muratsuchi, Assembly Member, 66<sup>th</sup> Assembly District  
Jeff Kiernan, League of California Cities  
Marcel Rodarte, California Contract Cities  
Dr. Alex Cherniss, Superintendent, Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District  
Jacki Bacharach, South Bay Cities Council of Governments  
Rancho Palos Verdes City Council

Ara Mihranian, City Manager  
Karina Bañales, Deputy City Manager  
Rolling Hills Estates City Council and City Manager  
Palos Verdes Estates City Council and City Manager  
Rolling Hills City Council and City Manager