



SOUTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

Dwight L. Stewart, Jr., President
Clarendon County

Timothy C. Winslow
Executive Director

March 24, 2020

The Honorable Henry Dargan McMaster
South Carolina Governor
State House
1100 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor McMaster,

The counties of this state and the South Carolina Association of Counties applaud your efforts to protect this state and her citizens during the COVID-19 crisis. The 46 counties join you in our joint determination to defeat this unparalleled health crisis. As you know, counties, as the general government closest to the people, are the “boots on the ground” in this fight. We will defeat this virus and South Carolina will emerge stronger.

In furtherance of the goal of protecting the people of this state, the South Carolina Association of Counties requests your assistance in implementing two public safety actions:

1. Local first responders desperately need to know the location of infected persons. DHEC appears to interpret state law as prohibiting the release of location information of infected persons to key county officials. This means our first responders are “flying blind” when responding to emergency situations. The South Carolina Association of Counties requests a gubernatorial directive authorizing the county emergency management official, as designated by the county, be informed of the location of their infected people.
2. Local first responders should be given priority status for testing for the COVID-19 virus. Currently, there is no statewide procedure in place for ensuring the testing of first responders who have contact with infected patients. First responders who do have contact with a COVID-19 patient, without testing, should quarantine for 14 days. Failure to test or quarantine will lead to asymptomatic emergency personnel spreading the virus to other workers or to patients. Either of these situations will lead to a shortage of emergency workers and accelerated spread of the disease. The South Carolina Association of Counties requests a gubernatorial directive granting priority status for testing for COVID-19 to first responders that have come in contact with an infected patient.

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Governor McMaster, please recognize that time is essential in the granting of these requests. The ability to have personnel able to respond to this emergency is critical. Without these directives it is likely that counties will quickly run short of emergency workers, exacerbating an already dangerous medical crisis. The people of South Carolina are at significant risk if the virus is allowed to undermine and endanger our emergency workers.

The South Carolina Association of Counties thanks you for your immediate attention to this matter. Also, thank you and your staff for all you have done to keep our citizens safe during these troubling times. The South Carolina Association of Counties and our member counties look forward to the eventual defeat of this virus and the future of South Carolina. Please let us know what we can do to assist in this fight.

Sincerely,



Dwight L. Stewart Jr.
SCAC President
Clarendon County Council Chairman



Tim Winslow
Executive Director
South Carolina Association of Counties

Cc: South Carolina Association of Counties Board of Directors
County Council Chairmen
County Chief Administrative Officers
County Emergency Management Officials
The Honorable Harvey S. Peeler, Jr., The President of the Senate
The Honorable James H. "Jay" Lucas, Speaker of the House of Representatives