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November 14, 2020

Re: Commissioners statement on increased COVID-19 state restrictions in Teller County, CO

On Friday November 13, 2020 the Teller County Commissioners, Teller County Public Health, and the Colorado Department of Health and Environment (CDPHE) met by phone to discuss Teller County's status on the state's COVID-19 Dial system. We were notified that Teller County will be moving from Yellow (Concern) to Orange (High Risk) on Monday, November 16, 2020. We argued our case and believe that this move is seriously damaging to Teller County.

Teller County went to Yellow on Monday, November 9, 2020. We made it clear to CDPHE that we need a reasonable amount of time at Yellow to have an opportunity to recover and stabilize our cases. A mere week is not enough time.

Moving to Orange will affect all of Teller County but especially the casino industry in Cripple Creek. Casinos have been singled out in the Public Health Order as the only industry required to close under the Orange designation with the exception of alcohol only bars. We argued that casinos should remain open similar to restaurants, gyms, retail establishments, and schools. To date, only 5% of Teller County's total cases have been traced to the Cripple Creek area.

The casinos in Cripple Creek have done an exemplary job of compliance to COVID-19 state regulations. Their protocols, sanitation, temperature checks, and response to a small outbreak have all been handled effectively and expeditiously.

Public safety is critical as is economic vitality and sustainability. This delicate balance must not favor one side over the other. We believe we must keep local businesses open and their people employed in a fair and rational manner, meanwhile taking every necessary health precaution to reduce disease transmission. More than 1,000 jobs are at stake and critical gaming tax revenue would be lost if casinos are shuttered.

CDPHE has indicated that they are considering our case to allow casinos to remain open and will report back to us on Monday, November 16, 2020. We are hopeful that the valid positions taken by the County, the Cities, casino industry, and elected officials across the county will yield a positive outcome on this critical matter.

We commend all businesses and organizations in Teller County who have worked hard to keep employees and patrons safe during the COVID 19 response. Please continue to apply COVID-19 health practices while conducting business and interacting in public spaces.

Sincerely,

Commissioners Marc Dettenrieder, Bob Campbell, and Norm Steen