

Office of the Director

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LOCAL HEALTH OFFICER ORDER

WHEREAS, on January 21, 2020, the first case of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was confirmed in a person from Washington, who had traveled from China through King County; and

WHEREAS, throughout February 2020, the number of cases of COVID-19 increased significantly within King County and its local cities and towns, with the first COVID-19 related death in the United States announced on February 29, 2020; and

WHEREAS, on February 29, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee proclaimed a state of emergency within the State of Washington due to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 1, 2020, King County Executive Dow Constantine proclaimed a state of emergency within King County due to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, local jurisdictions within King County have also issued proclamations of emergency; and

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared a state of pandemic due to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, President Donald Trump declared a National Emergency due to COVID-19, and on March 22, 2020 a Major Disaster was declared for the State of Washington; and

WHEREAS, on March 23, 2020, Governor Inslee imposed a “Stay Home – Stay Healthy” Order throughout Washington State prohibiting all people in Washington State from leaving their homes or participating in social, spiritual, and recreational gatherings of any kind regardless of the number of participants, and all non-essential businesses in Washington State; and

WHEREAS, on May 4, 202, Governor Inslee extended his “Stay Home – Stay Healthy” order until midnight on May 31, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the age, condition, and health of a significant portion of the population of King County and its local cities and towns places it at risk for serious health complications, including death, from COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, individuals with immunodeficiency are at a heightened risk of developing serious health complications, and of death from COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, nutrition is a critical determinant of immune responses, and having sufficient safe, healthy food is important in supporting an optimum immune system to reduce the risk of becoming infected, and of developing serious health complications from COVID-19;

WHEREAS, a large surge in the number of persons with serious infections can compromise the ability of the regional healthcare system to deliver necessary healthcare to the public; and

WHEREAS, the Washington Department of Health, Secretary of Health, has determined that it is critical for people to have access to safe and healthy foods during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for some of the state’s most vulnerable people who are often served by social services programs that are now unable to operate at full capacity; and

WHEREAS, the Secretary of Health further determined that food banks fill an immediate and pressing public health need by ensuring adequate nutrition during the COVID-19 emergency Stay Home – Stay Healthy measures to aid in mitigation measures to flatten the curve of cases; and

WHEREAS, due to the COVID-19 emergency, and a significant decline in ridership since the Governor issued his Stay Home – Stay Healthy order, mass transit agencies have reduced their routes and schedules, greatly limiting available public transportation options to access safe, healthy food, disproportionately affecting persons who are homeless, living in shelters or other congregate settings, those who are otherwise economically disadvantaged, seniors, disabled, and those regularly reliant on meal services, or otherwise unable to access safe, healthy food; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Policy on Public Assistance Program reimbursement for purchasing and distributing food during the COVID-19 pandemic, FP 104-010-03, identified three populations within impacted communities that may need the provision of food as a lifesaving and life-sustaining commodity: (i) Those who test positive for COVID-19 or have been exposed to COVID-19, but who do not require hospitalization; (ii) High-risk individuals, such as people over 65 or with certain underlying health conditions; and (iii) Other populations based on the direction or guidance of the appropriate public health official; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the first two populations above, the Washington Department of Health, Secretary of Health identified a third population that may need the provision of food – “other non-essential employees and their families that may have lost their jobs and have no substantial income”; and

WHEREAS, the Revised Code of Washington, Title 70.05.070(2) and (5), requires and empowers the local health officer to take such action as is necessary to maintain health and to control and prevent the spread of any contagious or infectious diseases within the jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, currently in King County and its local cities and towns, there are numerous other individuals who may be in need of safe, healthy food -- those who are homeless; those living in shelters or other congregate settings; economically disadvantaged individuals; seniors; the disabled; those regularly reliant on meal services, or otherwise unable to access safe and healthy food; and

WHEREAS, many food banks throughout King County have reported a surge in need with increasing numbers of individuals and families seeking their help, and with no indication that these individuals and families will have the ability to stop using food banks anytime soon; and

WHEREAS, global food supply chains are also experiencing shortages, and certain shelf-stable foods, fresh produce, and other basic necessities are becoming more difficult to obtain; and

WHEREAS, assuring that all people in King County have sufficient safe and healthy food, particularly vulnerable populations, is necessary as a lifesaving and life-sustaining commodity to maintain health and to control and prevent the spread of COVID-19;

WHEREAS, many social services programs which serve King County’s most vulnerable populations are currently unable to operate at full capacity; and,

WHEREAS, social services programs which serve King County’s most vulnerable populations have had to make changes in operations to ensure compliance with CDC guidelines on social distancing and Governor Inslee’s “Stay Home – Stay Healthy” order; and,

Based upon the above, as the Local Health Officer, I hereby find that ensuring that people in King County have adequate safe and healthy food is reasonable and conducive to maintain health and to the control and prevention throughout King County of COVID-19, a contagious and infectious disease.

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, as the Local Health Officer I hereby **ORDER** as follows:

King County, as well as the local cities and towns, are hereby authorized to use available resources for the purpose of procuring and providing adequate safe and healthy food to vulnerable populations, including those who test positive for COVID-19 or who have been exposed to COVID-19 and who do not require hospitalization, high risk individuals, such as those over 65 years of age and with underlying health conditions, and other populations, including but not limited to persons who are homeless, living in shelters or other congregate settings, those who are economically disadvantaged, seniors, the disabled, and those regularly reliant on food and meal services, or otherwise facing food insecurity and are unable to access sufficient safe and healthy food.

This **Order** shall **EXPIRE** upon determination by the Local Health Officer that there is no longer a need to provide food to vulnerable populations due to COVID-19.

Signed and ordered this 29th day of May 2020, in Seattle, Washington, by



Dr. Jeff Duchin
Local Health Officer
Public Health – Seattle & King County