May 6, 2020

Honorable Governor Kate Brown  
Office of the Governor  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Social Responsibility for Mitigating the Spread of COVID-19

Dear Governor Brown,

Thank you for your work to date in managing the COVID-19 outbreak in Oregon. Your early action at a critical juncture requiring Oregonians to stay home to save lives did just that. We are at another key point in this crisis, as Oregon makes plans for recovery from the health and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. New daily confirmed cases are hovering at a steady level rather than decreasing as they were for several weeks. This puts us in a precarious position as we begin to reopen the state. Hospitals and health systems strongly support reopening business and public life, but it is critical to do so carefully and cautiously. As Oregon considers reopening, it will be important to gradually relax public health policies, replacing them with measures that are less restrictive but still limit the virus’s spread. We believe this is the path to restarting our economy now and keeping our businesses open over the long-term.

As part of reopening, we urge you to consider a plan to encourage the public to wear face coverings to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. This is critical in all locations where people gather. As you consider reopening businesses and other places where people gather, we believe you should require face coverings in these settings as an element of statewide guidance on reopening. Face coverings help protect vulnerable populations and serve as important visual cues to encourage physical distancing and other best practices critical to mitigating the spread of COVID-19. We ask you to consider appropriate actions necessary to maximize use of face coverings by all people over the age of 2, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

We know that as stay-at-home restrictions are eased, COVID-19 will be transmitted in the community and the likelihood of disease spread will increase. We want to keep Oregon open and safe. Everyone has a responsibility to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 as public life reopens. Wearing face coverings should be foundational to any business opening where people will be gathered, indoors or out. While it might be tempting to selectively apply this principle to situations where physical distancing is impossible to maintain, such as hair salons, it is difficult to maintain safe distancing in many other businesses, especially grocery stores and 'big box' retail. Applying a universal precaution removes the burden of a difficult decision from the retailer and adds an element of security for the shopper. We must act today based on the best available science, recognizing that we are learning more every day about the disease and its transmission.
Thank you for considering strong actions on face coverings. We look forward to further dialogue.

Sincerely,

Becky Hultberg, President/CEO