

ADRIENNE A. JONES
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

10th Legislative District
Baltimore County



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The Maryland House of Delegates
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401-1991

August 13, 2021

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan
Governor
State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor,

We write to urge you to renew the Catastrophic Public Health Emergency. You have demonstrated to the nation what masking and vaccination can accomplish, and we commend you on your swift steps early in the pandemic to try to contain the virus.

However, the Delta variant has introduced a new level of contagion that will not be easily cowed. On June 21st, Maryland had just 40 cases per day. That has increased over twenty-fold to over 1,000 cases for the first time since April in yesterday's numbers. This is an urgent situation that requires an urgent response.

Just as you were able to end the State of Emergency earlier than expected as COVID-19 infections declined, the unknown nature of the virus and its variants requires that we change course once again.

Now is not the time to end the stated public health emergency – not only because of the limitations it will put on our State response but also because of the message that it sends to the public at large about the urgency of this situation, particularly as we prepare to send our children back to school. Despite assertions by your Department of Health (MDH) to the Health and Government Operations Committee, you have the full authority to renew or re-issue the State of Emergency.

During the August 6th Health and Government Operations briefing, legislators saw first-hand the impact that MDH's self-created crisis has placed on providers of adult day care services, telehealth services, and services to individuals with developmental disabilities. We need to continue the administrative rate for medical adult day care centers until they can re-open, census can be restored, and the industry can be stabilized. Discontinuation will severely impact the ability of these centers to continue operations to serve our most vulnerable citizens.

Similarly, we need to continue the Medicaid reimbursement for certain behavioral health telehealth services until we are through the public health threat presented by the current resurgence in COVID–19 cases. This resurgence requires the remote delivery of all types of behavioral health services, and it is clear that this population is fearful of entering facilities and are likely to be unvaccinated.

Unfortunately, several COVID–19 variants are once again requiring the State to readjust our response. We need to work together in the best interest of the citizens of this State so that Maryland can continue to be a national leader in pandemic response. We urge you to renew the Catastrophic Public Health Emergency before its expiration on Sunday to put the health of the people of Maryland at the forefront of our priorities.

Sincerely,

Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker

Sheree Sample-Hughes
Speaker Pro Tem

Shane Pendergrass
Chair

Eric Luedke
Majority Leader

Talmadge Branch
Majority Whip

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