March 22, 2020

Honorable James C. Justice, II,
Governor of the State of West Virginia
Office of the Governor
1900 Kanawha Blvd., East
Charleston, WV 25303

RE: Ordering a State Wide Stay-in-Place

Dear Governor Justice:

The Kanawha Charleston Health Department, the City of Charleston, and the Kanawha County Commission write to you concerning the COVID-19 virus that is spreading across our nation and our state. As you clearly stated in your 7:00pm address yesterday, our power to fight this pandemic is to stay away from one another and to limit person to person contact as much as possible. To that end, we respectfully ask you to reconsider your current decision and order a mandatory stay-in-place for the state of West Virginia.

As of today, 1 in 4 Americans are operating under a stay-in-place order. It is the opinion of the health professionals at the Kanawha Charleston Health Department that a stay-in-place order is a necessary measure that will slow the spread of this highly communicable virus and “flatten the curve.” As we have learned from Italy and now, New York, COVID-19 spreads rapidly -- quickly overwhelming the ability of first responders and hospital systems to care for and treat patients. In West Virginia, COVID-19 poses an even greater threat because so many of our citizens are elderly and living with pre-existing conditions. In Kanawha County, we are already running short on critical resources used by our first responders and health care workers including personal protective equipment. A state mandated stay-in-place order would provide valuable time for our health care system to prepare for the inevitable spike in the number of COVID-19 infected patients. We currently have 4 positive tests at CAMC Hospital, with 221 pending results, we are now the epicenter of the State of West Virginia.

As has been the case in other states, a stay-in-place order could allow for all life sustaining services and business to continue to operate, including all health care operations, grocery stores, convenience stores, restaurants serving take out, gas
stations, pharmacies, financial institutions, and all other businesses that offer vital and essential services.

For these reasons, we urge you to consider directing our residents to stay-in-place and, further, that your office advise local boards of health and emergency management operations of any plans to implement the same, prior to any announcement in a public address.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,

W. Kent Carper
President, Kanawha County Commission

Amy Shuler Goodwin
Mayor, City of Charleston

Ben Salango
Commissioner
Kanawha County Commission
Commission

Henry G. Shores
Commissioner
Kanawha County