



MEMORANDUM

Date: August 26, 2020

To: The Honorable Chairman and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

Re: **COVID Confusion and Mixed Messages**

Each week the White House Coronavirus Task Force (WHCTF) puts out a state-by-state report. The latest Arizona State Report is from Sunday, August 23, 2020. The first page of the report contains recommendations. Included in their recommendations are:

- *"Mitigation efforts must increase in Tucson to decrease continued community spread."*
- *"Continue bar closures and hotspot counties. Consider opening gyms with limited occupancy where masks and social distancing can be maintained – not in Tucson."*
- *"Continue the scale-up of testing, especially in Tucson, moving to community-led neighborhood testing and pooled household testing in Maricopa, Pima and Yuma counties..."*

Recently, Mayor Regina Romero and Supervisor Betty Villegas were on a conference call with the WHCTF Response Coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx and Mr. William Crozer. Also on the call was our Health Director Dr. Terry Cullen. Dr. Birx talked about Pima County and our statistics, saying that "Arizona was a bright spot except for this County." However, the data does not suggest such. In fact, the third page of the WHCTF State Report talks about localities in the Red Zone and Localities in the Yellow Zone. Tucson and Pima County are both listed in the Yellow Zone. Hence, it is difficult to understand how the recommendations are consistent with the actual facts and data of COVID-19 infections in Pima County.

Even more difficult to reconcile is the fact that in recent news reports, the State has indicated that it is about to announce that businesses and gyms can open as of Thursday, August 27, 2020 in Pima County. This purported guidance directly contradicts the WHCTF State Report.

To add further confusion to these matters, we now learn the CDC has indicated certain exposed individuals do not need to be tested, contradicting one bullet from the WHCTF recommendations.

The Honorable Chairman and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
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We continue to be very confused over these conflicting reports and will continue to rely on our data that was shared with Mr. Crozier on August 21. This shared data set was Pima County's- death, case, and CLI report, updated on August 21, 2020. This report included information about Pima County's number of COVID-19 cases (showing a decrease from a high of 2389 cases/week to 938 during MMRW week 33), a decrease in COVID-19 deaths from a high of 54 to 7 in the same MMWR week 33, and similar decreasing trends in hospitalizations and CLI cases. We did note two days of increased case report numbers; one explained by DOC reports (7/31); and one explained by a change in lab reporting in MMWR week 33 (a change in a flat file submission that week). We look forward to additional discussion to help reconcile our current situation with the WHCTF report.

CHH/lab

Attachments

c: Jan Leshar, Chief Deputy County Administrator
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer,
Health and Community Services
Dr. Terry Cullen, MD, MS, Health Department Director

Monica Perez

Subject: FW: Call with Dr. Deborah Birx (Friday, 1:30 Eastern)

From: Crozer, William F. EOP/WHO <William.F.Crozer@who.eop.gov>
Sent: Friday, August 21, 2020 3:14 PM
To: Theresa Cullen <Theresa.Cullen@pima.gov>
Subject: RE: Call with Dr. Deborah Birx (Friday, 1:30 Eastern)

This message and sender come from outside Pima County. If you did not expect this message, proceed with caution. Verify the sender's identity before performing any action, such as clicking on a link or opening an attachment.

Thank you – let me flag for Dr. Birx.

From: Theresa Cullen <Theresa.Cullen@pima.gov>
Sent: Friday, August 21, 2020 3:49 PM
To: Crozer, William F. EOP/WHO <William.F.Crozer@who.eop.gov>
Cc: Betty Villegas <Betty.Villegas@pima.gov>; Ramon Valadez <Ramon.Valadez@pima.gov>; Francisco Garcia <Francisco.Garcia@pima.gov>; Regina Romero <Regina.Romero@tucsonaz.gov>; Keith Bagwell <Keith.Bagwell@pima.gov>; Marjava Ramirez <Marjava.Ramirez@pima.gov>; Theresa Cullen <Theresa.Cullen@pima.gov>
Subject: FW: Call with Dr. Deborah Birx (Friday, 1:30 Eastern)

Mr. Crozer,

Pima County is concerned that we may be missing data points in our current data based on the comments made by Dr. Birx and yourself on the call today. Specifically we are interested in seeing the analysis that Dr. Birx referenced comparing Pima to similar size counties and to other counties in Arizona.

Attached please find Pima County's current death, case, and CLI report with you. Please see our report of COVID-19 cases by day (second slide) to see two days of concern (one explained by DOC reports (7/31) , and one explained by a change in lab reporting in MMWR week 33 (a change in a flat file submission that week)). This is consistent with the data being reported on the ADHS website.

Please help us understand the particulars of your and Dr. Brix's concerns. We are committed to data driven decision making and we want to make sure we are looking at the same data.

Thanks again for allowing us to be a part of this conversation. We look forward to continually learning and integrating recommendations from other jurisdictions to improve our public health response in the current pandemic.

Best regards,

Theresa Cullen, MD, MS

Pima County Health Department
Public Health Director
3950 S. Country Club Road, Suite 100
Tucson, Arizona 85714
(520) 724-7765
(520) 561-7441 (m)

From: Crozer, William F. EOP/WHO <William.F.Crozer@who.eop.gov>
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2020 2:30 PM
To: Ramon Valadez <Ramon.Valadez@pima.gov>
Cc: Betty Villegas <Betty.Villegas@pima.gov>; Keith Bagwell <Keith.Bagwell@pima.gov>; Marjava Ramirez <Marjava.Ramirez@pima.gov>; Francisco Garcia <Francisco.Garcia@pima.gov>; Theresa Cullen <Theresa.Cullen@pima.gov>
Subject: RE: Call with Dr. Deborah Birx (Friday, 1:30 Eastern)

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Thank you Chairman. Will look for confirmation. Appreciate your assistance.

And please do not hesitate to reach out if we can be helpful.

From: Ramon Valadez <Ramon.Valadez@pima.gov>
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2020 5:27 PM
To: Crozer, William F. EOP/WHO <William.F.Crozer@who.eop.gov>
Cc: Betty Villegas <Betty.Villegas@pima.gov>; Keith Bagwell <Keith.Bagwell@pima.gov>; Marjava Ramirez <Marjava.Ramirez@pima.gov>; Francisco Garcia <Francisco.Garcia@pima.gov>; Theresa Cullen <Theresa.Cullen@pima.gov>
Subject: FW: Call with Dr. Deborah Birx (Friday, 1:30 Eastern)

Dear Mr Crozer,

Because of a previously scheduled event, I cannot attend the call, but have asked one of my colleagues, Hon. Betty Villegas, to see if she can attend. She and her staff are copied on this email.

Additionally, I have forwarded your email to our public health officials and asked them to consider attending. Also, copied on this email.

Thank you so much,

Ramon

From: Crozer, William F. EOP/WHO <William.F.Crozer@who.eop.gov>
Sent: Thursday, August 20, 2020 2:04 PM

To: DIST2 <DIST.2@pima.gov>

Cc: Julie Castaneda <julie.castaneda@pima.gov>

Subject: Call with Dr. Deborah Birx (Friday, 1:30 Eastern)

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Chairman Valadez,

I wanted to reach out about our scheduled call with Mayor Romero and the City of Tucson tomorrow at 1:30 Eastern. On our National COVID-19 National Briefing Call on Wednesday, Dr. Birx mentioned Tucson as an area of concern regarding COVID-19 cases. We wanted to make sure you and the appropriate public health official were included on this call. Are you able to join? Also, who would the best public health official be to join this call as well.

Thank you.

William F. Crozer

Special Assistant to the President/Deputy Director

White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

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