



Office of the Governor

**MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **New Mexico elected officials send open letter encouraging private sector vaccination policies**

*'We need to finish the job. And we need your help.'*

SANTA FE – Senior and local New Mexico elected officials sent an open letter to state business leaders and commercial associations on Friday encouraging vaccination policies for employees and patrons that can help stem the rising tide of increased COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations.

New Mexicans can schedule their vaccination at **VaccineNM.org**.

The letter – signed by more than two dozen federal, state, city and county officials including Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich, U.S. Sen. Ben Ray Luján, U.S. Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez, U.S. Rep. Melanie Stansbury, state Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth and members of both legislative health committees, county commissioners and mayors – serves as a reminder that persistent vaccine hesitancy and resistance is, right now, a severe and imminent risk to New Mexico's ongoing economic recovery.

"In short, the pandemic is not over," the letter reads. "New Mexico was fast out of the gate with its vaccination distribution program, leading the United States in several key metrics and creating a foundation for economic growth, regrowth and opportunity. Indeed, in the most recent quarterly statewide economic report, matched taxable gross receipts were the highest they have been since December 2019, demonstrating a surge in economic activity across all 33 counties in our state unseen since the onset of the pandemic. This momentum, however, is not guaranteed; we must protect it and work to create an environment where consumers and workers feel safe. Vaccine resistance – often fueled by misinformation and propaganda – stands in the way. We need to finish the job. And we need your help."

Unvaccinated individuals are driving the recent uptick in COVID-19 risk both in the state and across the U.S. The New Mexico Department of Health reports 93 percent of COVID-19 hospitalizations over the last six months have been unvaccinated individuals, and 98 percent of COVID-19 fatalities over the last six months have been unvaccinated individuals. COVID-19

hospitalizations have more than doubled in the state over the last month, and new cases have reached a six-month high.

“Although these datapoints underscore the incredible efficacy of the vaccines as well as the risk to unvaccinated individuals, they are of concern for vaccinated and unvaccinated populations alike,” the letter reads. “Federal public health officials report that the virus may mutate among unvaccinated populations, creating so-called ‘breakthrough’ cases, endangering the immunity the vaccines provide – and jeopardizing the fragile progress we have all made toward resuming our normal social and economic lives.”

In the letter, officials highlight that public institutions in the state – including state government and the University of New Mexico, among others – have recently implemented policies that either mandate vaccinations or require unvaccinated individuals to undergo regular COVID-19 testing. Similar policies have been implemented by the U.S. government, local governments and myriad private sector entities in recent days across the country, including some in New Mexico.

“We expect these sorts of requirements to become significantly more commonplace in the coming weeks as governments and businesses recognize the severe and imminent economic risk of continued vaccine resistance,” the letter reads. “A willingness on the part of private sector leaders to take the initiative here in New Mexico will keep your workforce safer, boost consumer confidence and help guarantee that our steady economic progress is not needlessly endangered or reversed.”

Outlining a concern that increased infections amid vaccine hesitancy elevates health risks for even vaccinated New Mexicans, the letter continues, “The COVID-19 vaccines are accessible and free. And they are effective. Requiring vaccination of your workforce – and/or requiring proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test of the patrons who visit and support your business – is within your right as an employer. Implementing that sort of policy to help New Mexico finally end this pandemic is within your power as a community leader.”

The full letter is attached to this release.

The list of signatories is below:

Governor **Michelle Lujan Grisham**; Lt. Gov. **Howie Morales**; U.S. Senator **Martin Heinrich**; U.S. Sen. **Ben Ray Luján**; U.S. Rep. **Teresa Leger Fernandez**; U.S. Rep. **Melanie Stansbury**; Senate Majority Leader **Peter Wirth**; Sen. **Gerald Ortiz y Pino**, chair of the Senate Health and Public Affairs Committee; Sen. **Bill Tallman**, vice chair of the Senate Health and Public Affairs Committee; Sen. **Brenda McKenna**, member of the Senate Health and Public Affairs Committee; Sen. **Antoinette Sedillo Lopez**, member of the Senate Health and Public Affairs Committee; Sen. **Liz Stefanics**, member of the Senate Health and Public Affairs Committee; Rep. **Deborah Armstrong**, chair of the House Health and Human Services Committee; Rep. **Joanne Ferrary**, vice chair of the House Health and Human Services Committee; Rep. **Brittney Barreras**, member of the House Health and Human Services Committee; Rep. **Karen Bash**, member of the House Health and Human Services Committee; Rep. **Marian Mathews**, member of the House Health and Human Services Committee; Rep. **Roger Montoya**, member of the House Health and Human Services Committee; Rep. **Elizabeth “Liz” Thomson**, member of the House Health and Human Services Committee; Commissioner **Adriann Barboa** of Bernalillo County; Commissioner **Debbie O’Malley** of Bernalillo County; Commissioner **Charlene Pyskoty** of Bernalillo County; Commissioner **Steven Michael Quezada** of Bernalillo County; Doña Ana County Commissioner **Shannon**

**Reynolds**; Santa Fe County Commissioner **Anna Hansen**; Mayor **Daniel R. Barrone** of Taos; Mayor **Peter Nieto** of Mountainair; and Mayor **Alan Webber** of Santa Fe.

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