



Governor Douglas A. Ducey  
Arizona State Capitol Executive Tower

Representative Rusty Bowers, Speaker of the House  
Representative Ben Toma, House Majority Leader Elect  
Arizona House of Representatives

Senator Karen Fann, Senate President  
Senator Rick Gray, Senate Majority Leader  
Arizona Senate

Representative Reginald Bolding, House Minority Leader Elect  
Representative Jennifer Longdon, Assistant House Minority Leader Elect  
Arizona House of Representatives

Senator Rebecca Rios, Senate Minority Leader Elect  
Senator Lupe Contreras, Assistant Senate Minority Leader Elect  
Arizona Senate

December 3, 2020

#### **FOR ELECTRONIC DELIVERY**

Governor Ducey and leaders of the Arizona House of Representatives and Senate,

As organizations dedicated to ensuring the interests of everyday Arizonans are represented at the State Capitol, we implore you to take meaningful steps to ensure the 2021 legislative session is conducted in a manner that promotes and protects public health while also providing for transparency and full participation in the democratic process.

As the rate of COVID-19 infection reaches new peaks, it is essential that our state legislature recognize and respond to the reality in which we are living. In Arizona and across the country, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals, low-income families, and People with Disabilities are being disproportionately impacted by the novel coronavirus disease and its impact on the economy. Now more than ever it is imperative that our state leaders take bold steps to ensure that the voices of those most vulnerable can be heard at the Capitol without risking public health and welfare.

Current legislative processes, including short-notice meeting agendas, unnecessary and opaque constraints on use of the Request to Speak system, a lack of remote participation options, and hours of operation that inhibit participation by everyday people have, for too long, allowed only those privileged with time, knowledge, and economic security to have their voices heard at the state legislature.

It is critically important that you, our leaders, act now to adopt comprehensive reforms to legislative processes - to protect the health of both our communities and our democracy. We urge you to take this opportunity to make Arizona's government more open and accessible for all people, during this pandemic and long after.



To encourage public participation at this pivotal moment, we urge you to implement policies and procedures that include the following:

- **Mask mandate for all events at the state Capitol.** Evidence has shown the importance of mask-wearing in reducing the rate of coronavirus disease transmission. Visitors, staff, protestors, and legislators should feel safe at the state Capitol. Capitol security must adequately enforce this mandate and restrict access by unmasked or improperly masked individuals.
- **Remote and widely accessible opportunities for engagement in public hearings.** Video and/or teleconference options should be provided for all public hearings, and individuals wishing to testify should have the opportunity to do so and respond to questions in real time. Remote public access should include phone-in options for those in regions without adequate internet service. The legislature should ensure that ASL, language interpretation, and/or closed captioning services are available during all teleconference meetings, and transcripts should be made available as soon as possible after a hearing or meeting.
- **Streamline the Request to Speak process.** At present, a person’s Request to Speak account must be activated from a computer kiosk at the Capitol. For rural Arizonans and for those at high risk of COVID-19 illness this poses an unnecessary barrier to providing testimony. The legislature should allow a Request to Speak account to be activated from remote locations, and should develop an infrastructure for online testimony sign-ups wherein an individual will be notified of a time window during which they can expect to testify.
- **Pre-recorded video and/or written testimony.** Arizonans should have the opportunity and ability to submit pre-recorded video or written testimony, to be viewed or read aloud during any public hearing.
- **Adhere to public health guidelines.** If in-person attendance at any legislative hearing exceeds public health guidelines, the Arizona legislature must provide remote attendance options and move the hearing to a larger venue to promote full participation by members of the public.
- **Remote or alternative voting.** If the legislature establishes an alternative method of voting (for example, teleconference participation), the public record of the vote must be made clear and accessible.
- **Advance notice.** The public should be notified as far in advance as possible of any upcoming hearings, agendas, or changes.

We call on you as leaders in state government to reform our state’s public hearing processes. The suggested reforms will reduce disease transmission while increasing the opportunity for all Arizonans to engage in the democratic process.

Sincerely,

Ability360	Arizona Center for Disability Law	Arizona Dental Hygienists' Association
American Heart Association		
APFC	Arizona Center for Economic Progress	Arizona Early Childhood Alliance
Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans	Arizona Chronic Care Together Coalition	Arizona Faith Network
Arizona Association for Foster and Adoptive Parents (AZAFAP)	Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence	Arizona Grandparent Ambassadors and Kinship Caregivers
Arizona Asthma Coalition	Arizona Council of Human Service Providers	Arizona Peer and Family Coalition



Asian Pacific Community in Action	Healing Hearts Pediatrics, PLC	Rich and Kavita Bernstein
Arizona Public Health Association	Healthcare Rising Arizona	Save Our Schools Arizona
Arizona School Counselors Association	Kominote Community Consulting	Scottsdale Congregational United Church of Christ
AT Still University/Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health	Ktizo UCC	Southern Arizona Children's Advocacy Center, Inc.
Basic Needs Coalition	League of Women Voters	Stand for Children Arizona The UBU Project
Chicanos Por La Causa Child and Family Resources, Inc.	Lutheran Advocacy Ministry Arizona (LAMA)	Tucson Diocesan Council, Society of St. Vincent de Paul (Non-Profit)
Children's Action Alliance	Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest	UFCW 99
Civic Engagement Beyond Voting	Make Way for Books	University Presbyterian Church (Tempe, AZ)
Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona	Mountain Park Health Center Tempe	Valle del Sol
Corazón Arizona	Native American Connections	Wellness Equipped LLC
Desert Palm UCC, Tempe	Our Family Services	Wildfire: Igniting Community Action to End Poverty in Arizona
Empowerment Systems, Inc.	Protecting Arizona's Family Coalition (PAFCO)	
	PJ Boone Edgerton-Longoni	