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Snohomish County Leaders Push to Enter Phase II of Opening

Action by Board of Health and County Council necessary to advance proposal

EVERETT, Snohomish County, May 28, 2020—Today, Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers, Board of Health Chair Stephanie Wright, and County Council Chair Nate Nehring jointly announced their intention for Snohomish County to be moved into Phase 2 of Governor Inslee’s phased reopening plan. With Wednesday’s approval of the final piece of the COVID-19 response plan by the County Council, Snohomish County now has all of the elements necessary to meet Phase II requirements for large counties.

“Snohomish County residents have paid a heavy price from the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Executive Somers. “We will respond to the pandemic with everything we have and recover as quickly as we can. We now must move forward with our request to enter Phase II and help our people safely get back to work.”

“The Snohomish Health District and its partners have succeeded in preserving the health and safety of thousands in Snohomish County,” said Chair Wright. “It is now time for us to move into Phase II and restart our economy. I will be proposing that the Board of Health consider a variance on Friday.”

“It is critical that Snohomish County moves into Phase 2 so that we can begin to provide economic relief to our local businesses, workers, and families who are struggling,” said County Council Chair Nehring. “I am proud to join my fellow county leaders in this joint proposal to move us in the right direction and support our local economy.”

Due to the COVID-19 package approved Wednesday, Snohomish County now has adequate resources directed toward PPE, testing, contact tracing, and the isolation and the quarantine facility to meet the most important criteria for Phase II. Also, Snohomish County believes most hospitals currently have sufficient capacity to meet any potential surge, and the Health District intends to submit letters from each as part of any approved variance proposal. The rate of infection approaches the parameters set by the state, if subsets of irregular outbreaks, such as assisted living facilities, are taken into account, as the

CDC allows. The decision to apply for a variance will need to be approved by the Snohomish Health District Board of Health and the Snohomish County Council. Both have called for emergency special meetings on Friday in order to consider this proposal, and if approved, the package, with a letter from the Executive, will be submitted by the Snohomish Health District to the Washington Secretary of Health for consideration.

If Snohomish County is allowed to move to Phase II and beyond, it will be important to avoid a spike in infections and the likelihood of reverting back to Phase I. COVID-19 will be a threat for some time, but Snohomish County is now better prepared to manage the threat.

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