

Dear Honorable Supervisors Brown, Gjerde, Haschak, McCowen, and Williams:

I am a Mendocino County employee and part-time resident of Ukiah. I am writing to say that I am very, very worried about the limited testing that is currently available in Sonoma and Mendocino counties as well as the steps required through which we have any hope of accessing it.

I work in child welfare services in Ukiah, and I am currently exhibiting respiratory symptoms that suggest an unidentified virus that could (or could not) be COVID-19, according to a doctor I consulted through Plushcare earlier this morning. I believe it is urgent for me to be tested.

The doctor I spoke to directed me to self-quarantine and suggested I reach out to an ER or an urgent care if I wanted to be tested. After my appointment, I called the Mendocino County Public Health Department COVID-19 hotline to see if they could help me access testing for the disease. I was hoping they might have channels to expedite testing so I would not have to go through an ER, with the thinking that there would be strong motivation to test front-line workers who serve the public in their day-to-day work. We have both more risk of exposure and also more contact with others in the community, increasing the risk of community spread through contact with us. As our agencies continue our operations as "essential services" in the midst of a shelter-in-place protocol, this will be an ongoing issue.

Public Health in Mendocino directed me to contact disease reporting in Sonoma County because I'm a longer-time resident of Western Sonoma County and consider it my home base (though I spend most of my week in Ukiah). The Sonoma County hotline referred me back to contacting an ER or an urgent care facility.

I called an urgent care facility in Santa Rosa and was told I would need to come in for an exam to be considered for testing. However, I am confident that if I went to the urgent care, I would wait for a long period, get an exam, and ultimately be turned away without testing, because my symptoms are relatively mild. I don't want to have to be inside a medical facility, risking contracting or spreading disease during a pandemic. So I'm going back to bed after this series of futile phone calls, because I'm exhausted, and I need to rest.

Some of my clients in Mendocino County are medically vulnerable children. I work in the same building complex as many social workers serving older adults. And there are many, many members of the public who come to our building whose underlying health conditions are unknown to us. I share my part-time home in Ukiah with a housemate who works in a Willits hospital. Our staff in children's services travels extensively across the state to complete monthly contacts with children in their foster placements. Besides throughout our own county, our agency has children in southern California, the Sacramento area, the Bay Area, and beyond, including out of state. Unless our agency is directed otherwise by the the California Department of Social Services, taking their direction from the federal Administration for Children and Families, I assume the travel for our work will continue, and we will be continuing to visit foster homes in all these areas.

I was in the Bay Area, where the pandemic is particularly intense, about two weeks before I developed my symptoms: primarily a sore throat, fatigue, and a dry cough that has lingered for a week and now has an added wheeze.

As I said, I was directed by the Plushcare doctor this morning to self-quarantine, which I had already been doing since Sunday. She told me she thought my symptoms were inconsistent with a bacterial infection or the flu, and she thought it was a virus that *could* be COVID-19, but that that determination was impossible without testing. That test appears to be unobtainable to me at this time.

I am worried about my coworkers, clients, and the broader community in Mendocino and Sonoma counties and beyond. I believe those who work intensively with the public should have priority for testing, in our county and worldwide -- not just for our safety, to ensure the workforce in our agencies remains healthy and available to deliver essential services, but also for those in our broader community, with whom we are in close contact on a daily basis. We go into their homes, we examine their children, we drug-test and counsel them in our office.

We are being wrongheaded about our approach to testing, in our local community as well as the US as a whole.

I saw an NPR report today in which someone said people in the US are demanding testing too much, and that it would not significantly change our behavior if we got a positive result. I disagree. True, if I did have COVID-19 (let's all sincerely hope I don't), I would still be resting at home and quarantining/self-isolating, taking careful precautions with a mask and gloves when entering public spaces. But confirmation of COVID-19 would also mean public health alerts to those who have had contact with me.

The announcement of a case in our county might also have a sobering effect in the community as a whole regarding the importance of physical distancing. This pandemic requires a culture shift across our country, and there is extensive resistance to that change. I was sneered at in the Ukiah Costco on Saturday for trying to hold the six-foot distance in the checkout line. (I wore a mask and gloves through most of my shopping that day to try to protect those around me, though in that moment I had not yet located a mask. They are also hard to come by at this time, along with gloves.)

I don't understand why the public health departments and leadership in both our counties are not evaluating risk from a social networking perspective and considering the degree to which an individual has contact with the public as a factor in testing. I also strongly believe we need an infrastructure for drive-through testing in place in all our communities, to help reduce further spread.

I commend you and the rest of our leaders for issuing the recommendation for shelter-in-place practices last night. I hope you will be upgrading this to an order, following the lead of most of the Bay Area counties (including Sonoma, as of midnight tonight). It appears that Lake County will also follow suit within a day or two. And I also personally hope you will strongly consider following the measure of Lake County in temporarily closing our courthouse. I don't believe we

can effectively maintain the safety precautions warranted in this emergency in the context of the Superior Court of Mendocino County, based on my familiarity with that space and its operations. I don't believe there is adequate room to maintain six-foot spaces between individuals. Additionally, during hearings, the attorneys must be able to consult privately with their clients, which they cannot do at that distance. I don't see enough space in the courtroom we use for our hearings to be able to maintain that space. I also can't imagine seeing cleaning and disinfecting with the necessary frequency to prevent disease spread there, without active monitoring and enforcement.

My intention here is to speak to you in my capacity as a citizen rather than a representative of HHSA, though obviously, I draw on my experience in the agency in the comments I am making. I thought my concern might be of interest to you. Whether I am carrying the virus or not, the probability is that someone in the social services eventually will, and this situation I am discussing will contribute to this global health crisis.

In case it influences your consideration of my comments in any way, I hold a master's degree in Social Work with an emphasis in social policy and evaluation, I am registered by the Board of Behavioral Sciences of the State of California as an Associate Clinical Social Worker, and I will receive a PhD in Anthropology and Social Work from the University of Michigan in May. My area of expertise is in institutional practices.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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