



September 2, 2020

U.S. Senator Michael F. Bennet
Grand Junction Regional Office
225 N. 5th Street, Ste. 511
Grand Junction, CO 81501

RE: City of Aspen, Colorado personal visit

Dear Senator Bennet:

I wanted to express my sincere gratitude for taking time to meet with all constituents present today to discuss what can be done to keep our town and surrounding valley healthy and strong. We applaud you for your countless hours crafting the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act health and economic package. Kudos for proposing the Health Force with Sen. Gillibrand and for supporting a Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program. We are thankful for your steadfast work on numerous bipartisan bills including the Great American Outdoors Act to permanently fund LWCF and the introduction of the RESILIENT Act.

To reiterate our discussion from today, we support (1) a national aggressive testing strategy and look forward to updates on the TEST Act, (2) support for in-person learning for our youth in school, and (3) a commitment to a cooperative approach to the ski season that emphasizes the partnership between resorts and communities. We were enlightened with J-1 visa exemption discussion and welcome robust transportation conversation also.

As Karen Koenemann mentioned, working in sync with the Governor's office on a unified state-wide testing and containment strategy. We respectfully request support of aggressive advancement regional strategy for reliable, rapid testing for rural communities, continue to put pressure on the Governor's office to continue the statewide mask order, and not allow it to be an "opt out" if a county moves into Protect Our Neighbor, and support the CDC through funding and political clout. Public Health IS the route to economic and social recovery.

As Dr. David Baugh, Superintendent of Aspen School District addressed, we need support for in-person learning. Youth physically in school is critical to their success, the support for families, including those who are now new to our community, and support for our local workforce. Childcare is further tantamount. The cost of instruction is rising in the hybrid and distance learning formats. The digital divide continues in rural communities, including Pitkin County. As a former teacher yourself, I know you are well versed that teachers must learn new ways of instructions and classroom accountability. Children with special needs are high risk and need more resources for success. Distance learning is placing important positions on the sidelines that are necessary for reopening schools – cafeteria staff, bus drivers, etc.

Conversation with Mike Kaplan of Aspen Skiing Company gave you a glimpse into our upcoming ski season quandaries. J-1 visa matters and international guest demographics are just the tip of what to anticipate given the percentage of the workforce to be hired. Pressure to our Governor and state to agree to minimum standards would be most appreciated. Commitments to a cooperative approach to ski season



that emphasizes the partnership between resorts and communities while seeking a collaborative approach for proactive actions that support beyond basic standards will enable us to thrive.

We appreciate your candid conversation, time and understanding of the community impact we all feel and are facing. Thank you for your thoughtful work on so many issues that affect our community. It means a great deal to know that we can reach out to you, that you listen to our thoughts, and that you understand the need across this region.

Sincerely,


Torre, MAYOR
CITY OF ASPEN