



## Washington State Legislature

March 31, 2020

The Honorable Governor Jay Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

### ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Governor Inslee:

We commend you for your leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic and wholeheartedly support your efforts to protect all Washingtonians, especially those in our state who are most vulnerable to the virus.

The magnitude of the decisions you are making are unprecedented. Each of them has ramifications for every resident in our state, and we join you in making the safety and health of the people of Washington state the top priority.

On March 28, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) released new guidance that updated the DHS list of “Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce.” Included now is a section for Residential/Shelter Facilities and Services that specifically identifies, “Workers performing housing construction related activities to ensure additional units can be made available to combat the nation’s existing housing supply shortage.”

We are convinced safety and health is also the priority of the residential construction industry. In addition to complying with state safety standards, the industry aggressively promotes adherence to all public health guidelines set forth by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

According to OSHA, “Lower exposure risk (caution) jobs are those that do not require contact with people known to be or suspected of being, infected with SARS-CoV-2 nor frequent close contact with (i.e., within 6 feet of) the general public. Workers in this category have minimal occupational contact with the public and other coworkers.” ([Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#), page 20.) A large majority, if not all, land development and residential construction job tasks fall within OSHA’s Lower Exposure Risk jobs.

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Since the start of the outbreak, the industry has also been promoting the use of best practices for additional COVID-19 safety measures to implement and protect workers. This includes employees working six feet apart, adding washing stations on job sites, sanitizing tools and equipment, and wearing gloves and masks.

As you know, homebuilding (including remodeling and repair) is highly regulated and therefore cannot occur without support from the locality where it occurs. Builders require governmental approvals and permits to begin a project and they are needed through project completion. Therefore, governmental inspections occur along the entire process from the land development to the final certificate of occupancy.

Our state is already suffering from a critical housing shortage. Delays due to the “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order will only exacerbate the housing crisis, especially when you consider supply chain disruption, permit delays, financing complications, and an already tight labor market. Construction of housing is essential and should be allowed to continue.

Government functions related to the building and development process – such as inspections, permitting and plan review services – can be modified and adapt to the need to protect the public health, and fundamentally should continue and serve the construction of housing. These services are now also specifically listed in the DHS Critical Workforce list as essential to continue.

Residential home construction creates 167,947 jobs across the state. In addition to providing safe and stable homes for families, residential construction also generates over \$8.4 billion to our state’s economy.

With job sites safe and employees protected, keeping the men and women in this industry working must also be a state priority. If construction is disrupted, it creates a domino effect leading to dire, negative economic repercussions for an already-burdened economy.

Therefore, we respectfully ask that if you decide to extend the statewide “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order that you adopt the new DHS designations and reclassify residential construction as an essential service. This will enable a critical industry to resume operations in our state, while adhering to all of the requirements necessary to protect their employees and the public.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Andrew K. Barkis  
2<sup>nd</sup> District



Mike Chapman  
24<sup>th</sup> District



Brandon Vick  
18<sup>th</sup> District

Michelle Caldier  
26<sup>th</sup> District



Gina Mosbrucker  
14<sup>th</sup> District



Ed Orcutt  
20<sup>th</sup> District



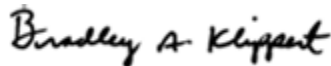
Luanne Van Werven  
42<sup>nd</sup> District



Joe Schmick  
9<sup>th</sup> District



Vicki Kraft  
17<sup>th</sup> District



Bradley Klippert  
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Chris Gildon  
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Bill Jenkin  
16<sup>th</sup> District



Mike Volz  
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Jesse Young  
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Larry Hoff  
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Drew MacEwen  
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Chris Corry  
14<sup>th</sup> District



Skylar Rude  
16<sup>th</sup> District



Kelly Chambers  
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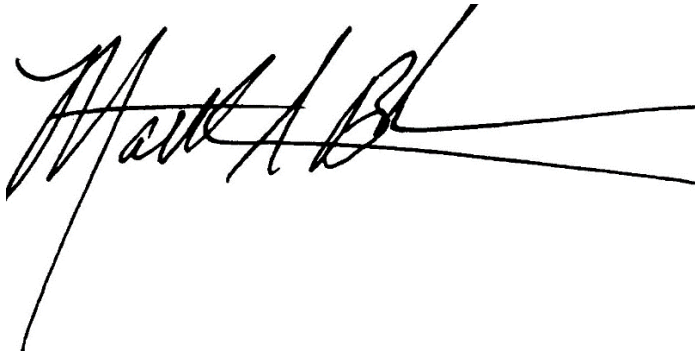
Paul Harris  
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Keith Goehner  
12<sup>th</sup> District



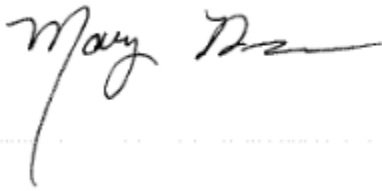
Carolyn Eslick  
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Jim Walsh  
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Mike Steele  
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Richard Debolt  
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Jenny Graham  
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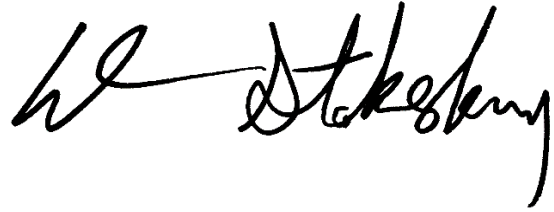
Tom Dent  
13<sup>th</sup> District



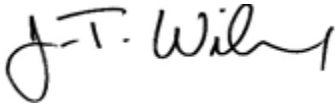
Bob McCaslin  
4<sup>th</sup> District



Norma Smith  
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Drew Stokesberry  
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J.T. Wilcox  
District

CC: Drew Shirk, Executive Director, Legislative Affairs