



January 14, 2022

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

Roger Millar  
Secretary of Transportation  
Washington State Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 47300  
Olympia, WA 98504-7300

ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Dear Governor Inslee and Secretary Millar:

We write to urge you to take action and restore the ability to travel through the mountain passes and open crucial supply lines. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has been suffering from crew shortages and the inability to accept mutual aid from local authorities because of Directive 21.14.3. This resulted in the closure of all four major highways through the Cascade Mountain Range for multiple days, and 3,575 response calls to collisions by the Washington State Patrol (WSP) during the time the state was covered in snow. This was shocking, and we are only at the start of winter.

We are very concerned for the safety of the traveling public. We believe there is a far greater risk to society from having unpassable and dangerous roadways than the risk of the spread of COVID by personnel driving snowplows, regardless of their vaccination status. There are far greater risks when supplies for hospitals are sitting in trucks on the side of the road waiting for the mountain passes to open and when medical staff cannot get to work because roadways are not passable.

We request you take action to modify the directive and empower both WSDOT and WSP to do what is necessary to get supply lines fully open and restore safer passage for all. We must ensure that mountain passes are able to be cleared in a timely manner for the next snowfall.

Some options for modification include:

- Welcoming workers who have had COVID back into the state workplace even if they chose not to receive a vaccination.
- Removing requirements that state agencies need to inquire of snow removal personnel, contractors, and highway maintenance crews about their vaccination status.
- Authorizing state agencies to accept mutual aid from cities and counties to address winter road conditions when people are in circumstances where social distancing and other prevention protocols are in place.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration recently confirmed that most solo truck drivers are exempted from the federal vaccine-or-test mandate, provided they interact with others exclusively in outdoor environments and only have de minimis use of indoor spaces. Furthermore, the U.S. Supreme Court blocked the Biden administration from enforcing its vaccine-or-test mandate for private businesses with 100 or more employees indicating it is a significant encroachment into the lives and health of a vast number of employees.

The bottom line: We need more essential workers, not less. The health circumstances have changed regarding the spread of the virus along with the risk factors. Current circumstances would justify a change in policy to address the immediate safety concerns of having freight corridors closed and dangerous road conditions.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Rep. Andrew Barkis  
2<sup>nd</sup> Legislative District



Rep. Keith Goehner  
12<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



Rep. Ed Orcutt  
20<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



Rep. Carolyn Eslick  
39<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



Rep. Jim Walsh  
19<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



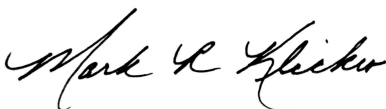
Rep. Eric Robertson  
31<sup>st</sup> Legislative District



Rep. Tom Dent  
13<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



Rep. Mike Volz  
6<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



Rep. Mark Klicker  
16<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



Rep. Robert Sutherland  
39<sup>th</sup> Legislative District