

Dear Chairman Wilborn and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee my name is Adam McCaffrey. I'm the owner of Summit Counseling in Manhattan, KS, and a Licensed Specialized Clinical Social Worker, Licensed Master's Addiction Counselor. I have worked in the Mental Health field for the past 16 years. I have seen a far greater negative impact on the mental health of Kansans caused by Governor Kelly's Stay at Home Orders and *Ad Astra* Plan than the impact of the actual Coronavirus. I am writing to share my concerns and to encourage law makers to open up Kansas.

The impact of the stay at home orders and *Ad Astra* Plan on the people of Kansas has been profound. It has negatively impacted the mental health of Kansans – individual adults, adult relationships, families, and children. Long periods of isolation can lead to depression, anxiety, and loneliness. Hundreds of thousands have found themselves unemployed, which has resulted in lost income, lost insurance, and loss of purpose. These losses all increase the risk of depression and anxiety, in both the short- and long-term. Adults with substance use disorders are at more risk for relapse or other problems because of unemployment and isolation.

Family life has been disrupted. Economic insecurity, coupled with school closures, has had a negative impact on the health of families. Parents are trying to deal with increased stresses from stay at home orders and added stress on relationships. They are doing this while teaching their children and – for those who are still employed – working from home. This can cause parents to have less patience with their children, become abusive, or lose confidence in their ability to parent. Tragically, the risk of domestic violence and its impact on mental and physical health also increases as couples in violent relationships are forced to spend more time in isolation at home.

Children have suffered greatly because of the Governor's actions. Children have been living without the supports they would normally have in school, church, recreational activities, or time with friends or other family members, and are now facing restrictions on summer camps. The lack of available activities creates stress, boredom, and isolation, which can lead to behavior issues as well as anxiety and depression. Heartbreakingly, some children are not safe at home. Children living with abusive or alcoholic family members have now been forced to spend long periods of time in isolation with their abusers. Studies show that such situations can cause trauma that impacts children in both the short-term and the long-term future. Children in Kansas are unfairly carrying the burden of the Governor's orders.

With the recent addition of Phase 1.5 in the Governor's *Ad Astra* plan the question becomes, "When will this all end?" All of the issues above are real and deserve to be recognized. Not knowing when schools will be open, theaters and entertainment allowed, and being able to go out in public without fear of government restrictions multiplies the impact of the issues. Dr. Bessel Van der Kolk, a leading therapist in treating trauma, states, "Anything is bearable as long as you know it's going to come to an end." The recent actions of Governor Kelly leave us all wondering when – or if – this is going to end and what reasoning she is using as she prolongs our return to normalcy. It is time to reopen the state and end these needless restrictions so that we can stop damaging the mental health of all Kansans.