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Public Comment

From: Jim Knell <jim.knell@sima.net>
Sent: Tuesday, January 19, 2021 1:13 PM
To: City Council
Cc: sbcob
Subject: Over 60 vacant store fronts between HWY 101 and Sola St.
Attachments: COVID Lockdowns May Have No Clear Benefit vs Other Voluntary Measures.docx;
Closed California versus open Florida.docx

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<https://photos.app.goo.gl/eVZ9b4Y725Qg5spSA>

I understand that it is easy to ignore the COVID Business closures when your government check or clears the bank every time. However, neither I nor my employees not to mention the hundreds of my merchants are in such a fortunate situation. However, now we are long past the 3-4 week mark and nothing is happening at the State, County and City nothing is happening. Our businesses continue to suffer. Walk the streets, look at the For Lease signs, talk to the business owners... I walked State st. yesterday, from the 101 HWY to Sola St. I photographed over 60 vacant storefronts. That number is up from 42 a month ago. This number represents almost a 30% vacancy...

The highest ever experienced in the City of Santa Barbara !!!! (please view the attached link to photos)

There are no indications that proper-social-distancing in retail stores and outdoor seating in restaurants aren't any more dangerous for people than staying at home when it comes to COVID-19. Quite the opposite seems to be the case in Santa Barbara County. Bottomline, the lockdowns are not working!!!! (look at the attached articles)

Better yet, look at SLO, businesses are open, people are eating on patios and hotels are busy. Where is the support from our SB County and City leaders?
If this doesnt end soon there will be no businesses left to rescue!!!!

The business community wants to hear from you and let us know what you are doing to support us????

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COVID Lockdowns May Have No Clear Benefit vs Other Voluntary Measures, International Study Shows

BY NATALIE COLAROSS ON 1/14/21 AT 11:41 AM EST

A study evaluating COVID-19 responses around the world found that mandatory lockdown orders early in the pandemic may not provide significantly more benefits to slowing the spread of the disease than other voluntary measures, such as social distancing or travel reduction.

The peer reviewed study was published in the *European Journal of Clinical Investigation* on January 5, and analyzed coronavirus case growth in 10 countries in early 2020.

The study compared cases in England, France, Germany, Iran, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and the U.S. – all countries that implemented mandatory lockdown orders and business closures – to South Korea and Sweden, which instituted less severe, voluntary responses. It aimed to analyze the effect that less restrictive or more restrictive measures had on changing individual behavior and curbing the transmission of the virus.

The researchers used a mathematical model to compare countries that did and did not enact more restrictive lockdown orders, and determined that there was "no clear, significant beneficial effect of [more restrictive measures] on case growth in any country."

"We do not question the role of all public health interventions, or of coordinated communications about the epidemic, but we fail to find an additional benefit of stay-at-home orders and business closures," the research said.

However, the researchers also acknowledged that the study had limitations, and noted that "cross-country comparisons are difficult," since nations may have different rules, cultures, and relationships between their government and citizenry.

The study was conducted by researchers affiliated with Stanford University, and was co-authored by Jay Bhattacharya, a professor of medicine and economics who has been a vocal opponent of coronavirus lockdowns since March.

Bhattacharya was also among a group of scientists who wrote *The Great Barrington Declaration*, a controversial statement that encouraged governments to lift lockdown restrictions to achieve herd immunity among young and healthy people, while focusing protections on the elderly.

For additional context, other studies have oppositely determined that lockdown orders have effectively saved millions of lives.

A new study shows that mandatory lockdown orders may not provide more significant benefits to curbing the spread of COVID-19 vs voluntary measures such as social distancing and travel restrictions. Here, one pedestrian walks on the pavement in central London in the morning on March 24, 2020 after Britain ordered a lockdown.

A study published in the journal *Nature* by researchers at Imperial College London in June found that some 3.1 million deaths had been averted due to lockdowns across Europe early on in the pandemic. "This data suggests that without any interventions, such as lockdown and school closures, there could have been many more deaths from COVID-19. The rate of transmission has declined from high levels to ones under control in all European countries we study," Dr. Samir Bhatt, an author of the study from Imperial College London said in June, according to the university.

"Careful consideration should now be given to the continued measures that are needed to keep SARS-CoV-2 transmission under control," he added.

A second study published alongside that report in *Nature*, and led by scientists in the United States, found that 530 million coronavirus infections had been avoided due to early lockdowns in China, South

Korea, Italy, Iran, France and the United States, according to the news outlet.

Mandatory lockdown orders have also been a highly politicized issue across the U.S.

Some Republican leaders, including Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves, have vehemently opposed state or nationwide closures to curb the spread of COVID-19. In Democratic states, including New York and California, lockdown orders have been a consistent part of the coronavirus response since March.

According to a poll released by Vox and Data for Progress on December 24, more than half of Americans said they would support a nationwide lockdown for one month.

But President-elect Joe Biden said in an interview in November that he had no intention of implementing a national shutdown when he takes office on January 20.

"I'm not going to shut down the economy. I'm going to shut down the virus," Biden said. "There is no circumstance which I can see that would require a total national shutdown. I think that would be counterproductive."

As of Thursday, the United States had recorded over 23 million COVID cases and 385,178 deaths since the start of the pandemic, according to Johns Hopkins University.

Newsweek reached out to an author of the Stanford study for comment, but did not hear back in time for publication.

Closed California versus open Florida, who is outperforming the other?

Florida has smaller population than California, but both have similar number of cases per 100,000 residents.

Nearly a year since COVID-19 first touched the United States, California, and Florida – both of which have responded to the pandemic in their own ways – are yielding vastly different results.

Florida, which has been more open and less restricted than its west coast counterpart, has recorded just above 1.5 million cases. Yet California, despite being among the strictest in the nation when it comes to COVID lockdowns, has recorded nearly twice that figure since the start of the pandemic.

Though Florida has a smaller population than California, both states have roughly the same number of cases per 100,000 residents.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom has faced harsh criticism for his strict handling of the coronavirus. Over the course of 2020, he has ordered bars, indoor dining, and other business shut down in counties passing a certain threshold of COVID-19 cases.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, however, has taken a different approach. Though he did take similar measures to Newsom early on in the pandemic, he allowed bars

and restaurants to open by June. A few months later, he lifted more statewide restrictions on the economy and prohibited law enforcement from fining people who don't wear masks.

In October, DeSantis said statewide school closures because of the coronavirus are not a viable option and "should be off the table."

Meanwhile, most of California's 6 million public school students have been learning remotely since the pandemic began in March. The Democratic governor late last month announced a \$2 billion plan to push the state's schools to begin allowing their youngest students to return to the classroom in February.

Deaths in Florida though – at 110 per 100,000 residents – have surpassed those in California, at 81 per 100,000, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The higher numbers, however, may reflect Florida's older population.

Yet CDC data indicates that California's death rate is gaining ground on Florida, with seven-day average daily deaths at 1.4 per 100,000 residents, compared to Florida's 0.8 per 100,000. And as of Saturday, positive tests in California are also higher at 105 new cases per 100,000 to Florida's 64 per 100,000.

California reached a grim milestone this week, with nearly 3 million coronavirus cases. The death from COVID-19 in Los Angeles County – an epicenter of the U.S. pandemic – works out to about one person every six minutes.

California's hospitalization rates have also surpassed Florida, at 56 per 100,000 residents, compared with Florida at around 36 per 100,000 residents.

We reached out to Newsom's team for comment on the drastic differences.