



STATEMENT

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IFP: Time to provide all Iowans with COVID-19 data, plans

A new policy brief by Iowa Policy Project research director Peter Fisher examines the arbitrary and backward-facing approach of the metrics that the administration of Governor Kim Reynolds has disclosed that Iowa officials are using in their response to the spread of the novel coronavirus. See that brief on the Iowa Fiscal Partnership (IFP) website, www.iowafiscal.org.

The Iowa Fiscal Partnership released the following statement from Mike Owen, executive director of the Iowa Policy Project, about the lack of transparency in Iowa's COVID-19 response.

"In a public health crisis like living Iowans and Americans have never seen, our leaders should welcome the value public scrutiny and perspective can bring to decision-making.

"It should not have taken an enterprising news reporter to coax out the short list of metrics¹ that Governor Kim Reynolds and her administration are using to make decisions about public safety. Responding to the crisis is public business, as consequential as most of us have seen. Iowans not only need to know what data is being used, and its sources, but how choices are being made with that information.

"Are other measures being considered? What measures have been dismissed? Who are the analysts? What comparisons are being made to other data and other states' actions? These are only a few of the questions that logically arise. Not enough testing is being done to make the Governor's metric of an infection rate meaningful, for one thing.

"The Governor asserts her actions thus far are as strong as official 'shelter-in-place' orders in other states. Even if comparisons wind up backing that claim, we need more information.

"Do we have the resources to make sure front-line health workers and all public and private workers handling essential services are protected? From medical care to corrections to seniors' housing to day-care centers, do workers have the personal protective equipment to do their jobs safely? Do they have sufficient resources to protect the people in their care? Any of us could be among those needing care in the coming weeks.

"It is fair for Iowans to ask how they can expect that the state will avoid an overwhelmed health care system when we are relying on looser rules for social interaction than they are seeing in other states. Should we not build into public policy the findings of analysis that illustrate the benefit of reducing travel in preventing the spread of the virus?²

"It is not possible for Iowa to have all hands on deck to respond without knowing what resources we have, what we can reasonably expect to need, and to know how our leaders plan to bridge any gap.

“Yes, we are owed the information. It affects us all, and without it we cannot contribute with ideas to make solutions better or bring them along faster.

“It is time — past time — that all Iowans are brought to the table.”

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The Iowa Fiscal Partnership is a joint public policy analysis initiative of two nonpartisan, nonprofit, Iowa-based organizations — the Iowa Policy Project in Iowa City, and the Child and Family Policy Center in Des Moines. Find reports at www.iowafiscal.org, and the IPP and CFPC websites, www.iowapolicyproject.org and www.cfpciowa.org.

¹ Zachary Oren Smith, Barbara Rodriguez, Jason Clayworth, Des Moines Register, April 2, 2020.

<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/health/2020/04/02/shelter-in-place-iowa-covid-19-benchmark-guidance-tool-waits-for-hospitalization-outbreaks/5111747002/>

² The New York Times, “Where America Didn't Stay Home Even as the Virus Spread.” April 2, 2020.

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/04/02/us/coronavirus-social-distancing.html?algo=top_conversion&fallback=false&imp_id=603400842&imp_id=967213594&action=click&module=trending&pgtype=Article®ion=Footer