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Dec. 16, 2020  
Open Letter Sent Via Email

Governor McMaster,

What's the plan?

We're nine months into this deadly pandemic. COVID-19 exposures are reaching new record highs every day. More and more South Carolinians are dying. Our hospitals are nearing capacity and our fragile healthcare system is on the verge of collapsing. Our healthcare professionals are frustrated and exhausted. More teachers are forced to leave the profession they love. Many employees are lured back into unsafe workplaces with minimal protections and pay. Record numbers of South Carolinians are unemployed...struggling to put food on their tables and keep a roof over their heads. With pandemic unemployment benefits ending this month, hundreds of thousands of our unemployed citizens are feeling hopeless, while we brag about spending almost a billion dollars to keep SC employers from having to pay higher unemployment taxes.

No shade. Just facts. The numbers don't lie. Just two weeks after Thanksgiving, our state saw new daily record highs. During the weekend of December 11-13 alone, South Carolina had 9,108 confirmed and 217 probable cases for a 3-day record-high total of 9,325 exposures and 114 deaths.

Where are you, Governor? The people of South Carolina are literally dying for leadership.

How can we collaborate to meet the critical needs and challenges that our constituents are facing because of COVID-19? South Carolinians deserve a government that works together in a bipartisan way to protect and serve them. We deserve a Governor who communicates with candor, owns his mistakes and has the courage to put people above politics.

These aren't idealistic goals or empty rhetoric. I just wanna hug my sons again. Our constituents wanna spend quality time with their loved ones, too. All of us wanna be "Open for Business" in a safe, responsible way. We want safe, open schools and places of worship. We can't wait to get back to our sports, movies and entertainment venues. We wanna travel again and not spend holidays separated from the people we love. But, this virus isn't going away just because we choose to ignore the science, dismiss experts' advice or act irresponsibly. In fact, politicizing this pandemic has already cost us almost 5,000 precious lives. And, thousands more will die if we don't do something different.

Government can't continue to recklessly turn a blind eye to the devastation and senseless suffering of its citizens. As the Chief Executive Officer of our state, I'm simply asking that you act like it. Thanksgiving slogans like, "Test Before Turkey" are lame, ineffective and lackadaisical. You have the power to slow the spread, save lives and bolster business:

1. Issue a statewide mask mandate.
2. Reissue temporary occupancy restrictions.
3. Voluntarily close schools and businesses to help prevent involuntary shut-downs.
4. Establish and enforce protocols that public health experts recommend.
5. Articulate a plan to help stop the bleeding and secure a sustainable path forward.

We can't wait on a vaccine to fix this for us. Nine months ago, we embarked upon an unprecedented journey that has changed the trajectory of our state for the foreseeable future. Leadership matters, especially when COVID-19 is the number one cause of death in America and the next 3 months are slated to be the roughest in our nation's history.

When our numbers began to surge this summer, you insisted that SC schools reopen for in-person, face-to-face classroom instruction. That decision alone cost some of South Carolina's best and brightest teachers, like young Demi Bannister and her mother, Shirley, their lives. But your response was, "People are gonna die. That's what this virus does." And just as flippantly...you've doubled-down everyday since and moved full-speed ahead when a simple, statewide mask mandate, brief stay-at-home order and a little political courage could save lives.

Governor, you've betrayed the trust of the people of this state. Our colleagues on both sides of the aisle have privately expressed a lack of confidence in your ability to govern. Your gross mishandling of this pandemic is the type of political malpractice that borders on criminality.

This isn't a personal or political attack. It is, instead, a fervent plea. As the death toll continues to mount on your watch, I implore you to put partisan politics aside and protect the people of South Carolina. You have the power. Please muster the courage.

I remain committed to collaborating and supporting you and our colleagues in that effort.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mia". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a prominent "M" and a long, sweeping tail on the "a".

Mia McLeod