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Dear Sir, Governor Doug Ducey,

God has granted you great responsibility as the governor of the State of Arizona. We pray regularly for you in our churches, that you govern well, and that you experience God's great love for you in Jesus Christ. I am writing today to express my gratitude to you for identifying faith communities as essential to the citizens of Arizona. As we know so well, not every Governor has taken this stand. A person in leadership, such as yourself, regularly receives letters of complaints rather than of gratitude. It is for that reason that I want you to know, on behalf of the congregations and schools I represent, that we are thankful for your partnership and support.

It is my privilege to serve as District President (Bishop) of the Pacific Southwest District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; a judicatory that covers Southern California, the Las Vegas corner of Nevada, and the entire State of Arizona. We have 58 congregations and 27 schools (Early Childhood Centers, K-8, and High Schools) in the State of Arizona. Many these ministries are also engaged in extended social service ministry to the citizens of their communities.

Spiritual Health Supports Physical Health

A health crisis is also a spiritual crisis. The framers of the Constitution, while perhaps not envisioning such a turn of events as COVID-19, understood that religion provides a significant benefit to the state and chose to enshrine it with special privilege. At a time of crisis, more than ever, citizens need access to their communities of faith. Presented with this virus and the resulting economic challenge, we all benefit greatly in knowing God's power, presence, protection, and love. Your position affirms this and supports, not only church members, but the well-being of all citizens with whom they interact.

Taking Freedom Seriously

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod takes freedom seriously. We believe and confess a gracious God who has freed us from our own self-interest to serve and love our community through Jesus Christ, the Savior of the whole world. I am proud of the efforts of our congregations and schools which, during shelter-in-place orders, have refrained from assembling for the welfare of their own membership and, even more, for the love of their communities. As churches begin to reopen in Arizona, we know this must be done responsibly and pledge ourselves to follow your leadership in promoting wise and thoughtful reopening guidelines which guard the health of our members and the welfare of the communities in which they live.

Thank you for your leadership and for the privilege of assisting the people of Arizona. May God be with you.

Rev. Dr. Michael Gibson
President, Pacific Southwest District
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

Cc: The LCMS Churches and Schools of Arizona