

TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



STEVE TOTH

April 22, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711
Delivered via Email

Dear Governor Abbott,

Last week, you invited me to submit questions for your conference call with members of the Texas Legislature and U.S. Congress. I chose the most pressing concern that my constituents ask me about each day and submitted it as my question:

We don't feel that a phased approach will open up the economy quickly enough – will you allow healthy people to go back to work immediately while allowing the medically fragile to stay at home?

Unfortunately, your schedule prevented you from answering my constituent's deepest concern. That is why I am respectfully asking you again to address our question.

Consider that Montgomery County has experienced seven deaths. **Five of the seven resided at a single senior living apartment complex in my district.** One of the deceased was someone who died outside of Texas, **leaving only one Covid-19 death outside of a senior living facility.**

According to the Health and Human Services Commission of Texas, approximately 33% of the 495 deaths reported on April 20 were from individuals residing in nursing homes and assisted senior living facilities. **However, HHSC does not track unregulated senior living communities like the apartment complex in my district.** It's likely more detailed reporting would reveal the true percentage of deaths connected to senior communities is higher.



DISTRICT 15

Even worse, our county has mourned significantly more suicides than Covid-19 deaths over the last month. In my research on the link between job loss and suicide rates, I discovered a [Wayne State University study conducted by Dr. Steve Stack](#) indicating:

In the modern era, **for every one percent increase in the unemployment rate**, there has typically been **about a one percent increase in suicides**.

Still more grim news hit us yesterday. Oil prices are dropping below zero dollars into negative territory as demand has evaporated. As you know, in House District 15 and the Greater Houston Region, the oil and gas industry helps many of my constituents put bread on their tables.

Our question has become a request.

My constituents have followed requests and orders to socially distance. But now that supply chains are established and we have supplies and capacity, why can't we truly reopen Texas? With a death rate from Covid-19 proving to be this low, how can we not?

Respectfully, Texans are already reopening.
They are lining up at Home Depot and H.E.B. and Sam's Club.
They are rallying to live life with all of its risks.

Businesses are ready. Montgomery County businesses – even prior to federal and state orders – had already implemented safe and responsible business practices to protect their customers.

Let my constituents go to work while they are still listening *because they are going to go back to work regardless, as **their lives depend on it.***

Respectfully,



Steve Toth
State Representative – HD 15