



**LEWIS AND CLARK**  
CITY-COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

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1930 Ninth Avenue  
Helena, Montana 59601  
Telephone 406-457-8900  
Fax 406-457-8990

November 18, 2020

Montana Legislative Leadership  
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Representatives Galt, Vinton, Abbott, and Knudsen and Senators Blasdel, Smith, Cohenour, and Ellsworth,

As we draw near the start of the 2021 Legislative session in January, the Lewis and Clark City-County Board of Health would like to take this opportunity to advocate that legislators carefully plan to provide the greatest amount of protection for legislative members, staff, the public, and our community here in Helena. This request comes as the State of Montana, including Lewis and Clark County, are experiencing a sharp increase in daily COVID-19 case incidences. Our hospitals are stretched beyond capacity to serve our communities, and we are losing our neighbors, friends, and family to this disease. Unfortunately, Helena is no exception. Please review Lewis and Clark County Decision Making Dashboard for the most up-to-date information: <https://www.lccountymt.gov/health/covid-19/local-covid-19-decision-making-dashboard.html>

The safest possible plan is to hold the 2021 Legislative Session virtually. This would best protect legislators, staff, and the public from exposure to SARS-COV-2 and the serious illness associated with COVID-19. A virtual session would limit the need for travel and the possibility of spread to and from counties across the state. This approach would protect the most vulnerable and still allow for important legislative business to occur.

If a full virtual session is not possible, the board advocates for virtual participation by most: staff, members of the public, and legislators who fall in the at-risk population. This approach would limit the number of individuals in the Capitol at any given time, ultimately reducing the risk of transmission. For those legislators participating in-person, it is critical that strict physical distancing be adhered to, face coverings required, and sanitation protocols followed.

If the legislative leadership team chooses to have individual members present at the Capitol for the session, the board further requests you fund and assign a dedicated contact tracing team to the session. Lewis and Clark Public Health does not have the capacity to assist with case investigation and complicated multi-county contact tracing if a member of the legislative body or the public tests positive for the virus while participating in the legislative session.

As you plan for the session, we also ask that you give us a point of contact who can partner with us to help you in your preparation efforts. We are more than happy to provide resources and technical assistance so adequate environmental controls and protective measures are in place for the 2021 session. We appreciate your serious consideration of these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Murgel", is written over a light-colored rectangular background.

Justin Murgel, Chair  
Lewis and Clark City-County Board of Health  
1930 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Helena, Montana 59601

*Our mission is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis and Clark County residents*