

## Associated Chambers of the Flathead Valley

Community advancement organizations serving Northwest Montana

May 22, 2020

The Honorable Steve Bullock  
Governor of Montana  
PO Box 200801  
Helena, Montana 59620-5529

**Re: Letter of Support for a Targeted Opening of Glacier National Park on June 1**

Dear Governor Bullock:

Thank you for your strong leadership and early, consistent action on combating COVID-19 in Montana. As a result of your initiatives, and with the support of the citizens of Montana, we are among the most well-positioned states in the country to take the steps you outlined on Tuesday. Governor Bullock, as you deliberate with health advisors, federal partners, and local officials, we would like to request your consideration of an additional item. On behalf of the undersigned organizations and the 1,526 businesses and organizations we represent, we invite you to give your most serious consideration to a targeted opening of Glacier National Park on June 1, 2020.

We think it makes sense, and will be less confusing to the traveling public, to open Glacier National Park on the same schedule as the Montana entrances to Yellowstone National Park. We assure you that we are committed to working with you, your agencies of state government, and the National Park Service to develop and communicate the proper messaging for our member businesses and visitors.

Governor, we understand the challenge with which you are faced to balance health and safety with economic and fiscal health. There is no doubt, however, about the economic impact of COVID-19 on the Montana economy. Over 100,000 Montana job-loss claims have been filed since the beginning of this crisis in mid-March. The University of Montana BBER projects a loss of 75,000 jobs, on average, over 2020. This further projects a shortfall in state personal income of \$6.4 billion or 11.7 percent compared to pre-COVID projections. Additionally, BBER projects a slow recovery to the state economy for employment and personal income extending well beyond 2023. Moving up the Glacier National Park reopening schedule gives visitors, hospitality and food service sectors, and other sectors, a significant head start on a better summer season.

Northwest Montana is benefited by a strong health-care capacity. There has not been a reported COVID-19 case in Flathead County for over a month and there are no hospitalizations.