

# KANAWHA COUNTY COMMISSION

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**Ben Salango**  
Commissioner

**W. Kent Carper**  
Commissioner

**Lance Wheeler**  
Commissioner

April 16, 2024

*Sent via Email to [Matthew.Q.Christiansen@wv.gov](mailto:Matthew.Q.Christiansen@wv.gov)*

Matthew Q. Christiansen, MD, MPH  
Bureau for Public Health  
Room 702  
350 Capitol Street  
Charleston, WV 25301

Re: Region 5 WV First Foundation

Dear Dr. Christiansen,

In July of 2023, we were pleased to elect you as a Region 5 representative on the West Virginia First Foundation Board of Directors. During that pivotal meeting, a motion was passed, with unanimous support from all local governments present, advocating for the inclusion of the West Virginia Open Meetings Act in the Foundation's bylaws. The rationale behind this motion stems from the imperative need for transparency and accountability, particularly in light of instances elsewhere where oversight boards convened in private, prompting legal intervention to enforce compliance with Open Meeting Acts. The mistakes we have seen, including the blatant lack of transparency and disregard of public interest, must be avoided. One must look no further than to the missteps of the State of Ohio's Foundation.

To date, we have not heard anything as to what you have done to ensure that the bylaws have been amended to where the Foundation would be subjected to the Open Meetings Act. And there lies the underlying problem: lack of communication. The Counties and Municipalities have heard nothing as to the actions of the West Virginia First Foundation. We understand that there have been meetings, but that information has been garnered from the media. We should hear from our duly elected representative first, rather than hearing it second hand after the fact and from the media. To date, we have not been notified when the meetings are to occur, the agenda for the meetings, and provided a copy of the minutes from the previous meetings. Communication is the beacon that prevents us from stumbling in the darkness of ignorance. The Counties and Municipalities of Region 5 deserve direct, transparent information, not mere shadows filtered through the media's lens.

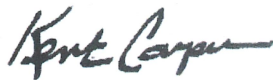
We acknowledge the recent hiring of an Executive Director for the Foundation, which is a positive step forward. However, we do not believe this should be used as a justification for the lack of

communication with Region 5. The Foundation has been entrusted with a significant portion of the Opioid Funds to address the ongoing crisis in our communities, and as such, it is imperative that we are kept informed of its activities and decisions. Prudence requires us to have some understanding as to the first round of funding by the Foundation. Truly, a sense of urgency is called for.

Please understand that we appreciate the heavy burden that all members of the foundation have been saddled with. This Epidemic did not occur in just one night, and it will take years upon years to recover from. We are glad to have you as our Representative to the Board as we all tackle this difficult task. We can think of no one better suited than you to represent Region 5, and we look forward to new avenues of communication being open in the future.

In closing, we extend our appreciation for your dedication to serving Region 5 on the Foundation's Board of Directors. We look forward to constructive dialogue and enhanced transparency in the future.

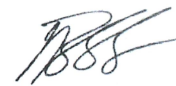
Respectfully Yours,



W. Kent Carper  
Commissioner



Lance Wheeler  
President



Ben Salango  
Commissioner

Cc: All Local Governments of Region 5