

April 4, 2020

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf,

On behalf of our chambers of commerce, representing hundreds of thousands of employees and the overwhelming majority of the private sector workforce in the Commonwealth, we are writing to offer our assistance in streamlining the process of business closings under the governor's statewide order. First, let us express our appreciation to you and your Administration for helping the Commonwealth through this public health crisis.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), as of Sunday, March 29th, Pennsylvania has received over 30,000 requests for waivers from the order that "non-life-sustaining" businesses close to slow the spread of COVID-19, of which we understand about 13,000 have been resolved in some manner. We appreciate the dedication of Department personnel in reaching this point. However, many of our members have expressed concern and uncertainty over the criteria used to determine the process regarding which businesses can continue physical operations.

The decision to shut down the current waiver process effective COB Friday, April 3rd gives us the opportunity to work together to bring more certainty to the process with a goal of significantly reducing the number of waivers necessary while ensuring safe working conditions for our employees and customers. We would respectfully encourage you to keep the following ideas and principles in mind as we move forward over the coming weeks:

First, and most critically we must ensure that all those who continue to work are sufficiently protected from disease. Adherence to guidance from the Centers for Disease Control is of paramount importance.

Second, it is crucial that aspects of the critical infrastructure supply chain are protected. The current guidance from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has been amended to make this need explicit.

Third, we ask you to recognize that, typically, outdoor work entails much less risk of transmitting disease than indoor work. Many of our members who perform various outdoor functions believe they can adequately protect their members in these environments by practicing distancing and avoiding having more than one person in a vehicle. In fact, many work as single operators.

Fourth, we encourage more reliance on CISA by the private sector and, as you have frequently noted, make sure employers are using “common sense.” So long as an employer can make a compelling case that they should be allowed to continue physical operations under CISA guidelines, they should do so. In order to do so, businesses should have documentation from their customers that the product or service they provide is part of the critical infrastructure supply chain as described in CISA. In addition, they will be required to adhere to guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control including social distancing and sanitation. The last item will be stringently enforced. Large numbers of our members have been practicing these guidelines for an extended period of time already.

We believe that implementation of the above ideas will allow DCED to focus on a smaller number of waivers, help cushion negative economic impact, and allow a springboard to a quicker recovery while providing the necessary protections for our citizens.

We thank you for the work you are doing for this Commonwealth and look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

Ron Aldom
Executive Director
Somerset County Chamber of Commerce

Chad M. Amond, MBA, IOM
President & CEO
Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce

Tom Baldrige
President/CEO
The Lancaster Chamber

Gene Barr
President & CEO
Pennsylvania Chamber of Business & Industry

Renee Blomstrom
Executive Director
Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce |

Danielle Bodnar
Executive Director
Upper Bucks Chamber of Commerce

George Book
President & CEO
West Shore Chamber of Commerce

Steven Scott Bradley
Chairman
African American Chamber of Commerce of PA, NJ & Delaware

Jessica Capistrant
President
Phoenixville Regional Chamber of Commerce

Doris Carson Williams
President and CEO
African American Chamber of Commerce Western PA.

Guy Ciarrocchi
President & CEO
Chester County Chamber of Business and Industry

Michelle Hornick Crowley
President & CEO
Carlisle Area Chamber of Commerce

Bob Durkin
President/CEO
Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce

Bernard Dagenais
President & CEO
The Main Line Chamber of Commerce

Fred Gaffney
President
Columbia Montour Chamber of Commerce

Jim Gerlach
President & CEO
Greater Reading Chamber Alliance

Chris Heck
President and CEO
Pittsburgh Airport Area Chamber of Commerce

Joe Hurd
President/CEO
Blair County Chamber of Commerce

Mark Hilliard
President
Indiana County Chamber of Commerce

Steven P. Hunsberger
Executive Director
Indian Valley Chamber of Commerce

Tony Iannelli
President & CEO
Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce

Pamela Kelly
President & CEO
The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Montgomery County

Helen Kissick
President & Executive Director
Beaver County Chamber of Commerce

Wendy Klinghoffer
Executive Director
Eastern Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce

Jeff Kotula
President
Washington County Chamber of Commerce

Cheryl B. Kuhn, IOM
President & CEO
Southern Chester County Chamber of Commerce

Trish McFarland
President
Delaware County Chamber of Commerce

Rosanne Barry Novotnak
President
Norwin Chamber of Commerce

Steven J. Plaugher
Executive Director
Downingtown-Thorndale Regional Chamber of Commerce

Lynda Pozzuto
Executive Director
Alle Kiski Strong Chamber

L. Michael Ross
President
FCADC

Laurie Ryan
President
Exton Region Chamber of Commerce

Brian Schill
Executive Director
Peters Township Chamber of Commerce

Carrie Stuart
President
The Chamber Gettysburg & Adams County

Narasimha B. Shenoy
Founder, President & CEO
Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia

Matt Smith
President
Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce

Gina Suydam
President
Wyoming County Chamber of Commerce

Vern Squier, CCE, PaCCE
President & CEO
Chamber of Business and Industry of Centre County

Donna W. Steltz, IOM
Executive Director
Western Chester County Chamber of Commerce

Susan Williams
President/CEO
Venango Area Chamber of Commerce

Rob Wonderling
President & CEO
Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia

Mark Yoder
President and CEO
Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce