

An Open Letter to our State Legislators across southeastern Pennsylvania

We are writing to you because of our deep concern with both the pace and the process of reopening businesses, be it by County-designation or by business industry. We are also writing to re-extend our offers to help—to help the Department of Health; our County elected officials and you in providing information, guidance and materials to our members and the community at large so that we may reopen safely and swiftly.

While the Governor's announcement on Friday was a step in the right direction; respectfully, it was not a solid commitment and, frankly, his timeline is still too slow to meet the realities of our businesses. Many businesses should be permitted to open now and too many businesses will needlessly stay closed during the “yellow” phase—with no timeline for any of them to reach “green.”

Our concern about the economy extends beyond our members and even beyond our membership footprints. We are concerned that countless businesses in the Commonwealth will never re-open. And, as more and more states re-open sooner, faster and more extensively, we are concerned that Pennsylvania businesses will increasingly lose business to competitors in Florida, Ohio, Maryland, Delaware, and elsewhere. Some Pennsylvania companies may lose business that they will never get back. That turn of events will cause our economic pain to be deeper and to last longer.

Under the Governor's reopening process—which is still somewhat unknown, almost all of our southeastern Counties may not become “green” for at least a month or more. As a practical matter, this means that even if a majority of counties become yellow or even green, over 50% of the Commonwealth's GDP will be in a virtual lock-down. The region of the state that typically grows fastest and is the engine for the state will be moving the slowest, if at all. This will ultimately devastate the Commonwealth's ability to fund schools, health departments, and roads

We write to you not only because of our deep concerns about our members or even the economy across the Commonwealth. We write to you because we believe the Administration's standards are keeping too many businesses closed and too many people closed off. In addition, there is a growing number of medical experts in both the physical and mental health fields that are expressing grave concerns about shelter in place. Citizens are missing physicals and blood tests and children are missing vaccinations; and, depression and anxiety are on the rise.

We are concerned that not only is the advice of medical experts from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia falling on deaf-ears; we are even more concerned that updates and revised guidance from the CDC—e.g., with respect to the lowered risk of transmitting the disease through surfaces—seem to have no impact on the Commonwealth's plans.

Because of all of these considerations, we write to you with an urgent request and an offer.

We request that you:

- Work together to urge the Governor to revise his metrics for reopening, taking into account the counsel of medical professionals across our state, such as UPMC.
- Review and incorporate the strategies and plans of neighboring states such as Ohio, Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey.

If you are unsuccessful in having the administration revise its approach; *we urge you to work on a bipartisan strategy to pass legislation to move us along a transparent, specific and targeted reopening plan, over-riding the Governor if that is what is needed.*

Our offer to you is this: as we have been doing since the start, we promise to work with you to educate, support and supply the businesses in our region, so that each may reopen safely.

We will follow and promote the CDC guidelines and work with our staffs and Boards of Directors to use all media platforms and all resources at our disposal to support our businesses.

Let us commit to allowing no more businesses to close and to get every one of Pennsylvania's 2 million unemployed back on the payrolls as quickly as is practically possible.

These are our urgent requests. We hope you will join with us to make it a reality.

Respectfully,

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

Benjamin Frank, Executive Director, Center City Proprietors Association

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

Pamela A. Kelly, President & CEO, Chamber of Commerce for Greater Montgomery County

Rob Wonderling, President & CEO, Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia

Guy Ciarrocchi, Esq, President & CEO, Chester County Chamber of Business & Industry

Trish McFarland, President, Delaware County Chamber of Commerce

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

Laurie Ryan, President, Exton Region Chamber of Commerce

Mary Ann Severance, President, Great Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce

Frank V. Facchiano, COO & EVP, Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce

Pamela Henshall, President, Greater Northeast Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce

Jim Gerlach, President & CEO, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance
Mark Yoder, President, Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce
Steven P. Hunsberger, Executive Director, Indian Valley Chamber of Commerce
Bernard Dagenais, President & CEO, Main Line Chamber of Commerce
Christine Grove, Executive Director, Oxford Area Chamber of Commerce
Renee Blomstrom, Executive Director, Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce
Jessica Capistrant, President & CEO, Phoenixville Regional Chamber of Commerce
Matt Cabrey, Executive Director, Select Greater Philadelphia Council
Cheryl B. Kuhn, President & CEO, Southern Chester County Chamber of Commerce
Carla Haydt, Executive Director, Spring-Ford Chamber of Commerce
Eileen Dautrich, President, TriCounty Area Chamber of Commerce
Danielle Bodnar, Executive Director, Upper Bucks County Chamber of Commerce
Donna Steltz, Executive Director, Western Chester County Chamber of commerce