March 5, 2021

Dear Governor Murphy,

As leaders of the Garden State’s major business associations, we request that you take action now in two areas that help to responsibly maximize the state’s economic recovery.

As you well know, for businesses to plan their next recovery steps, they need predictability and flexibility. New Jerseyans have taken the difficult, but necessary, steps to reduce COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations and the pace of the vaccine rollout is continuing to improve, while warmer weather is just around the corner. To maximize the state’s economic recovery, businesses need visibility to a reopening decision-making plan now in order to plan for the months ahead. Further, businesses need to be engaged in the vaccination rollout by being able to operate as community points of dispensing (PODs) for our employees.

**A Comprehensive Reopening Plan:**

The business community needs specific reopening benchmarks to provide transparency and predictability. After nearly a year of the pandemic, businesses are reeling: the number of small businesses open as of February 10 was down 34.2% relative to January 2020. With hospitalizations below 2,000 and other COVID metrics in our continued favor, we need a comprehensive strategic reopening plan that lays out the indicators and thresholds that will determine further reopening this spring and summer. Businesses need that predictability to make informed decisions that are right for their operations, employees, and customers.

We recognize data determines dates. Therefore, we request definitive thresholds be established for the data you are using to drive reopening decisions. Further, those thresholds should only result in restrictions that are narrowly tailored and rationally related to the goals they are seeking given the current circumstances.

Additionally, we request an increase and a new approach to indoor and outdoor gathering capacity limits. For businesses affected by gathering capacity limits, events are usually booked well in advance, meaning businesses need to know now what they can reasonably expect for the spring and summer. At a minimum, capacity limits should be relative to the square footage of a venue. It does not make sense to have the same capacity limit for a small garden party versus a larger venue. As other COVID-19 public health precautions remain in place, increasing gathering capacity limits is responsible and reasonable, especially for outdoor gatherings given the approaching warm weather.

Further, we urge you to review past rules for the childcare industry and enable additional, prudent reopening. Along with schools, childcare centers offer key support to parents who work. The continued practice of placing capacity restrictions on childcare licenses puts the industry in a severely disadvantaged position relative to surrounding states who do not have those restrictions. We fear New Jersey’s childcare
industry, after a challenging year and under current capacity limits, will be unable to meet the demand for their services, hindering families from balancing an increasingly normal work schedule and childcare responsibilities.

**Vaccine Distribution:**

As vaccine supply increases, it is highly appropriate to now implement a plan that includes businesses as community PODs. As we move beyond the initial phases of vaccine distribution, utilizing employers could improve vaccination efficiency, free up capacity at open PODs, and improve vaccine hesitancy given that employees already have an established relationship with their employers.

Employers can be a good source of education for their workforce as the vaccine rollout continues and employees may be more apt to engage in the process if they choose to be vaccinated when their employer is involved in the process. As such, it is time to provide employers with a plan to be further engaged in the vaccine rollout, as we have seen in other states.

These requested actions are essential, and the timing is now critical, as our COVID numbers continue to move in our favor and warmer weather is on the horizon. As we move into the spring and summer, we cannot afford to lose a single day of opportunity to responsibly and safely bring our businesses further along to their recovery. Businesses need to plan now and, therefore, need to be aware of the state’s plan. Providing straightforward reopening metrics, a road ahead for removing capacity limits and a plan for expanding vaccine distribution would give businesses the information they need to safely succeed. Without the ability to make informed and strategic decisions, New Jersey will continue to suffer economically even as the nation begins to move forward.

If you have any questions, please contact NJBIA Chief Government Affairs Officer Chrissy Buteas at cbuteas@njbia.org.

Sincerely,

African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, Inc.
American Camp Association NY/NJ
American Institute of Architects/ NJ Chapter
American Council of Engineering Companies of New Jersey
American Physical Therapy Association of New Jersey
Big I New Jersey
BioNJ
Burlington County Regional Chamber of Commerce
Bus Association of New Jersey (BANJ)
Cape May County Chamber of Commerce
Capital Region Minority Chamber of Commerce
Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia
Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey
Chemistry Council of New Jersey
Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey
CrossState Credit Union Association
Downtown New Jersey
Early Childhood Education Advocates
Eastern Monmouth Area Chamber of Commerce
Employers Association of NJ
Fuel Merchants Associates of NJ
Garden State Pharmacy Owners, Inc
Greater Atlantic City Chamber
Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce
Greater NJ MotorCoach Association
Greater Toms River Chamber of Commerce
Greater Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce
Hoboken Chamber of Commerce
Home Care & Hospice Association of New Jersey
Home Health Services Association of New Jersey
Hudson County Chamber of Commerce
Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce
Insurance Council of New Jersey
Jersey Shore Partnership
Mahwah Regional Chamber of Commerce
Marine Trades Association of New Jersey
Middlesex County Regional Chamber of Commerce
Meadowlands Chamber
Monmouth Ocean Development Council
Morris County Chamber of Commerce
NAIOP-NJ
National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB)
Newark Alliance
Newark Regional Business Partnership
New Jersey Asphalt Pavement Association
New Jersey Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons
New Jersey Bankers Association
New Jersey Builders Association
New Jersey Business & Industry Association
New Jersey Camps Government Affairs Project
New Jersey Campground Owners and Outdoor Lodging Association
New Jersey Civil Justice Institute
New Jersey Coalition of Automotive Retailers
New Jersey Concrete and Aggregate Association
New Jersey Council of County Colleges
New Jersey Dental Association
New Jersey Fitness Alliance
New Jersey Food Council
New Jersey Gasoline- Convenience-Automotive Association
New Jersey Hotel and Lodging Industry Association
New Jersey Independent Electrical Contractors Association
New Jersey Liquor Store Alliance
New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program, Inc.
New Jersey Motor Truck Association
New Jersey Pharmacists Association
New Jersey Podiatric Medical Society
New Jersey Restaurant & Hospitality Association
New Jersey Retail Merchants Association
New Jersey Salon and Spa Coalition
New Jersey Self Insurers Association
New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants
New Jersey State Funeral Directors Association
New Jersey State Veterans Chamber of Commerce
New Jersey Tourism Industry Association
New Jersey Warehousemen & Movers Association
New Jersey YMCA State Alliance
New York Shipping Association, Inc.
NJ Society of Optometric Physicians (NJSOP)
North Jersey Jewish Business Alliance
Ocean City Chamber of Commerce
Phillipsburg Chamber of Commerce
Princeton Mercer Regional Chamber of Commerce
Professional Insurance Agents of New Jersey (PIANJ)
Recreational Fishing Alliance
Salem County Chamber of Commerce
Somerset County Business Partnership
Southern NJ Development Council
Southern Ocean County Chamber of Commerce
Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of NJ
Sussex County Chamber of Commerce
TechUnited:NJ
The Greater NJ Motorcoach Association
The United Boatmen of N.J.
Union Township Chamber of Commerce
Washington Borough BID