

To: Governor Phil Murphy, New Jersey State Senate and New Jersey General Assembly,

From: New Jersey Business Coalition members

African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, Inc.

American Camp Association NY/NJ

American Council of Engineering Companies of New Jersey

American Physical Therapy Association of New Jersey

Bernards Township Regional Chamber of Commerce

BioNJ

Burlington County Regional Chamber of Commerce

Bus Association of New Jersey

Cape May County Chamber of Commerce

Capital Region Minority Chamber of Commerce

Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia

Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey

Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey

CrossState Credit Union Association

Early Childhood Education Advocates

Employers Association of NJ

Fuel Merchants Association of NJ

Garden State Pharmacy Owners, Inc.

Global Business Alliance

Gloucester County Chamber of Commerce

Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce

Greater Toms River Chamber of Commerce

Greater Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce

HealthCare Institute of New Jersey

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

International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association

Mahwah Regional Chamber of Commerce

Marine Trades Association of New Jersey

Meadowlands Chamber

Medical Society of New Jersey

Middlesex County Regional Chamber of Commerce

Monmouth-Ocean Development Council

Morris County Chamber of Commerce

NAIOP - NJ

National Federation of Independent Business

New Jersey Asphalt Pavement Association
New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies
New Jersey Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons
New Jersey Builders Association
New Jersey Business & Industry Association
New Jersey Campground Owners and Outdoor Lodging Association
New Jersey Chamber of Commerce
New Jersey Child Care Association
New Jersey Civil Justice Institute
New Jersey Coalition of Automotive Retailers
New Jersey Concrete and Aggregate Association
New Jersey Dental Association
New Jersey Gasoline-Convenience-Automotive Association
New Jersey Hotel and Lodging Industry Association
New Jersey Independent Electrical Contractors Association
New Jersey LGBT Chamber of Commerce
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 Tech Council
New Jersey Tourism Industry Association
New Jersey Utilities Association
New Jersey State Veterans Chamber of Commerce
New Jersey Warehousemen & Movers Association
New York Shipping Association, Inc.
Newark Regional Business Partnership
North Jersey Jewish Business Alliance
Ocean City Chamber of Commerce
Princeton Mercer Regional Chamber of Commerce
Professional Insurance Agents of NJ
Recreational Fishing Alliance
Somerset County Business Partnership
Southern Ocean County Chamber of Commerce
Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey
Sussex County Chamber of Commerce
The United Boatmen of N.J
Union Township Chamber of Commerce

Utility & Transportation Contractors Association

Date: May 21, 2020

Re: Critical next steps to effectuate business preparedness to reopen

As the leaders of New Jersey's major business organizations who collectively provide millions of jobs in the State, we were pleased to see the "Road Back" vision of a phased-in reopening of New Jersey this week. We appreciate the positive course this puts us on.

We recognize that the work of building upon a recovery framework will fall to the advisory councils and the Governor's Restart & Recovery Commission. We hope these groups can use the abundance of information produced by this New Jersey Business Coalition, representing more than 80 business association and nonprofits, available at www.njbia.org/recovery.

Knowing that the work of the Commission and advisory councils will take time, we write to you today to detail the urgent need to establish specific guidance, metrics, targets, and risk assessment levels in order for New Jersey's business community to effectively and expeditiously advance through the stages set in the "Road Back" plan.

While we respect the process, we must strongly emphasize that time is of the essence for too many in our business community. Many have reported to us they are already out of money or nearing the end of any rainy day or surplus funds that they once had on hand. Nine weeks with little or no income is something many never imagined. Many of the coalition members are receiving calls daily from business owners who have decided to close permanently, while others are at or nearing desperation levels.

Predictability and certainty are needed right now in order to be prepared to reopen. This affects how businesses will establish and execute on a new business model, as well as how to access capital as business plans are needed to do so.

With an undeniable sense of urgency, we are encouraging consideration of the following recommendations to ensure the expediting of critical next steps to reopen our economy.

GENERATING GUIDANCE

One effort that can swiftly be done now in order to help business be best prepared for reopening is to turn the provided best practices into specific guidance, similar to what New York and California have done in their recovery efforts.

Businesses need predictability to know exactly what will be expected of them when they open. Proper preparation takes time and money. With money scarce right now for so many employers, every last penny must be effectively spent toward the correct reopening, ensuring no dollar is wasted on unnecessary operational costs that may or may not be needed.

We have heard that some regulatory agencies are working with their regulated industries on guidance premised on the industry best practices, but they are waiting for "authority" from the Governor's office to move forward. We ask: Can they be authorized to formally move the guidance? And if not, can we request that this happen now?

The same holds true for local health departments that are trying to work with their local businesses. These departments are telling businesses they are awaiting the state's authority to say what the guidance will be.

It's important to note this is not a request to reopen tomorrow. However, we do appeal to you to complete this guidance as soon as possible because business needs to effectively prepare right now.

ESTABLISHING METRICS

Predictability and certainty call for visibility to the specific metrics that will be used to determine a safe opening of each sector in the State.

Our surrounding states have outlined clear metrics and targets to achieve advancement through phases to protect the safety of all. For example, with the great news that hospitalizations in New Jersey have decreased, what target in the decrease will trigger the next phase of reopening? We note that, depending on where you are in the state, the target may be different for two companies in the same industry located in different areas. As an example, hot spots.

Further, in considering targets, we respect the four healthcare considerations set by the Governor as being protective of public health. We offer, however, that public health indicators can also include the ability of businesses and child care facilities to support physical distancing, as California's public health indicators have included. This shows that public health and economic considerations do not need to be mutually exclusive.

Businesses in states with transparent metrics and targets know when their region of the state is close to moving to the next phase, and that is essential for planning purposes. This is also why we have advanced a regional approach to reopening for consideration.

ASSESSING RISK LEVELS

At his press briefing on Monday, May 18, Governor Murphy said industries will reopen according to their risk level. We respectfully ask how that risk level will be determined.

We submit there are vertical and horizontal risks that need to be considered in a methodical fashion. Is a tool being established to do this so a business will know what is deemed to be their risk factor and then to ascertain what steps they need to take to mitigate that risk in order to reopen? This is why we previously advanced the example of a risk assessment tool created by Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC), which can be found at <https://www.wmc.org/backtobusiness/>

Further, utilizing a risk assessment tool, such as the WMC example, will provide public confidence that both the Governor and we agree are needed. Throughout this process, the public will gain full visibility to the risk rating of a business and see the steps it has taken to keep customers safe.

SETTING THE STAGES

In his “The Road Back” vision, the Governor noted that 25% (note: some industry data reports larger numbers) of the workforce works from home, or can work from home, and should plan to continue that for the foreseeable future. He suggested that a return to offices will not come until after Stage 3, into what was deemed the “new normal.” However, he also said the “new normal” does not come until a vaccine or therapeutic is available.

We ask if this means that no offices will reopen (except for essential work in that office) until a vaccine is available? For many in this coalition, this was the takeaway and it seemed to be the conclusion regardless of how office environments can vary by size and utilization and how many may be able to easily social distance.

We caution that a one-size-fits-all approach in this category could have significant impacts on the costs of doing business, where companies will, in essence, be maintaining two offices for their workforce. This will also have a profound impact on New Jersey’s real estate market.

It was also suggested that child care will expand in Stage 2. Yet, there are now workers in Stage 1 being asked to return to work who cannot because of the limited child care offerings. A Stage 1 broader solution must quickly be advanced that can then grow into Stage 2, or we will run the risk of lacking workforce in the first stage.

More regionally, yet just as timely, we also recommend regional considerations for the Shore economy, as we continue to hear the need for clearer guidance on short-term rentals and concerns from boardwalk merchants that the curbside retail model is simply not economically feasible.

In closing, our coalition has advanced detailed and vetted options for consideration that need to be turned into guidance quickly so that we can get some form of workforce back. We continue to encourage you to view the best practices vetted by many industry representatives, found at www.njbia.org/recovery. And we continue to stand ready to assist with a great deal of collective information. We want to help ensure a safe and sustainable opening for New Jersey, putting the health and welfare of our workforce, patrons and vendors first.

Thank you for your time and consideration.