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Dear Members of the New Jersey Legislature,

We have a hiring crisis and we need your support to empower our workforce to return to work.

As we head into New Jersey's peak economic season and welcome further reopening of our businesses that have operated at limited capacity for well over a year, it is incumbent upon us all to ensure we have a workforce ready to fill the jobs that are becoming available.

Recall that New Jersey was the last state to recover from the Great Recession. We cannot afford to repeat that. There is great promise ahead, but our economy remains fragile: businesses are struggling to find workers, the number of small businesses open was down 38% on May 12 relative to January 2020, and New Jersey's unemployment rate was 7.5%, the seventh highest in the nation.

We request the Legislature implement a *Return to Work Strategy* that will properly ease unnecessary restrictions, support our workforce, and assist businesses.

Here is what we are asking:

- 1. Urge the Governor to address restrictions in the childcare industry** – The Governor should review the current restrictions on the childcare industry and determine which restrictions are no longer necessary. Although COVID-19 group size limits have been lifted, there are still additional restrictions on the industry that make it challenging to meet demand. For parents to work, their children need to be in a safe environment. We urge you to ask Governor Murphy to address outstanding restrictions to ensure parents have access to childcare now and through the summer.
- 2. Urge the Governor to reopen One-Stop Career Centers** – Jobseekers and employers need better access to reemployment and training support, such as that provided by our One-Stop Career Centers versus an oversubscribed online or call-in system. These centers make the connections for reemployment and serve as a critical communication tool for jobseekers and employers. We are concerned that One-Stop Career Centers are not operating as effectively as possible since many of them are still closed to in-person services. With many of the restrictions on workplaces lifted, we ask that you communicate to Governor Murphy the need to reopen One-Stop Career Centers in person to better serve our workforce.
- 3. Support workforce development initiatives through budget resolutions to train and reskill New Jersey's workforce** - We urge the Legislature to adopt budget resolutions that would direct funds to the Workforce Literacy and Basic Skills Program, the Pathway & Skills Collaborative & Industry Centers for Excellence, and the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development to support training initiatives for our workforce. This will not only

help workers access better opportunities, but also assist businesses by addressing the skills gap seen in many industries. We urge your support of these resolutions.

- 4. Enact S-3759 (Gopal/Scutari) / A-5735 (Mazzeo) to support small businesses** – Thank you to Senators Gopal and Scutari, and Assemblyman Mazzeo for introducing this [legislation](#) that would provide small employers with tax credits to help them recover some of their lost revenue and enable them to pay their employees more to get them to return to work, while absorbing the increasing minimum wage. The bill provides a tax credit to employers worth 10% of wages paid to employees earning near the minimum wage. Moreover, the legislation aims to assist areas hit hardest by the pandemic by increasing the credit to 20% in counties where the unemployment rate exceeded the state unemployment rate. We urge you to enact this legislation to assist our small businesses.

- 5. Enact business safe harbor protection** – Thank you to the legislators who introduced **S-2634 (Gopal) / A-4440 (Houghtaling/Greenwald/Mazzeo)** and **S-2628 (Diegnan/Bucco) / A-4377 (Freiman/Lopez/Spearman)**, which would provide balanced liability protections for the employer community. The liability protections sought by the business, nonprofit, and higher education communities create the right balance by shielding only those businesses and institutions that comply with applicable guidelines, while providing no liability protections for “bad actors” who flout standards or fail to provide a safe environment. These liability protections will not in any way impact the right of employees to assert all of their existing legal rights should they be exposed to the virus at work. We urge you to enact these necessary protections.

S-2634 / A-4440 is co-sponsored by Senators O'Scanlon (R13); Cardinale (R39); Oroho (R24); Holzapfel (R10) and Assembly members Mukherji (D33); Dancer (R12); Lopez (D19); Stanfield (R8); DiMaso (R13); Scharfenberger (R13); DePhillips (R40); Thomson (R30); Auth (R39).

S-2628 / A-4377 is co-sponsored by Senator Oroho (R24) and Assembly members Dancer (R12); Reynolds-Jackson (D15); DePhillips (R40); DiMaso (R13); Mukherji (D33); Mazzeo (D2); Stanfield (R8); Peters (R8); Johnson (D37) Space (R24); Wirths (R24).

- 6. Pass legislation to reform work requirements for youth workers** – Youth workers age 14-17 have certain restrictions on the type of work and hours of work they can perform. We request you introduce and pass legislation that will change these antiquated rules to open opportunities to hire these youth, many of whom are seeking those first-time employment opportunities that can fill the gap for non-returning workers.

- 7. Send a letter to President Joe Biden asking that he expedite the J1 visa program now.** This program is a critical part of our summer seasonal workforce. Our federal delegation is very active on this issue, and we request your action as well. Click [here](#) to view a letter NJBIA sent on this topic. We urge each of you to send a letter to

President Biden on this issue. Bipartisan support from our state legislators would communicate to President Biden the importance of this action.

- 8. Cover the UI liability facing our state nonprofits.** Thank you to the Senate for passing S-3714 (Madden/Gopal). We thank the Assembly for advancing A-5691 sponsored by Assembly members Greenwald (D6), Murphy (D7), and Verrelli (D15) out of committee and urge the full Assembly to pass it as soon as possible. Nonprofits have received massive, unexpected bills to reimburse for UI. Legislators and nonprofit advocates thought the new law would cover these reimbursement bills, but the NJDOLWD has interpreted the law differently sending these unexpected bills to many of our state nonprofits that were forced into layoffs because of the pandemic. This bill would help cover the liability that these nonprofits are facing.

- 9. Lift Unnecessary Executive Orders** – NJBIA acknowledges that the passage of S-3866 (Sweeney) / A-5820 (Coughlin/Chiaravalloti) will lift several EOs, such as EO 192, that are no longer necessary and give our businesses many of the tools they need to realize a full recovery. However, this measure will leave in place several EOs that are no longer necessary and will make it difficult for different parts of the economy to recover. Despite our opposition, NJBIA does appreciate the bill's improvements and looks forward to continuing to work with the Legislature as we transition from the public health emergency to a renewed focus on our economic recovery.

We urge you to act on these priorities. If you have any questions, please contact me at 908-447-3466, or by email at cbuteas@njbja.org.

Sincerely,



Chrissy Buteas
Chief Government Affairs Officer