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To: Chairman Burzichelli, Vice-Chairman Schaer & Members of the Assembly Appropriations Committee

From: Christopher Emigholz, Vice President Government Affairs

Date: November 12, 2020

RE: NJBIA **Strong Support** for A-4910 (Burzichelli/Johnson/Danielsen) – Creating County-Based Pandemic Plan for Business Operation

Good afternoon! My name is Christopher Emigholz, and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs for the New Jersey Business & Industry Association (NJBIA) covering tax, budget and economic development issues. On behalf of our member companies that provide 1 million jobs in our State and make NJBIA the largest statewide business association in the nation, thank you for posting this bill and for allowing us the opportunity to express our **strong support for A-4910**.

NJBIA has long called for two things to help our businesses in this pandemic and this bill achieves both:

- 1) a more regional approach to reopening that will enable New Jersey's economy to recover more quickly, nimbly and safely
- 2) a more transparent reopening process with clear and consistent timelines and data usage so businesses have more predictability, certainty and hope for when they can increase capacity and can return closer to their normal business model

Regional Approach:

The public health and economic situation at a restaurant in Salem, New Jersey has very little to do with that of a bar in Paramus, yet statewide executive orders governing business operations treat these two businesses in towns separated by over two hours and 130 miles the same way. Instead, our next-door neighbor in New York has a regional approach where businesses in Buffalo may be treated differently than businesses on Long Island if public health dictates that as appropriate and safe. Pennsylvania also has a regional model that allows for the separate treatment of businesses in Philadelphia versus businesses in more rural Central Pennsylvania. This would mean that businesses in parts of the state that have been spared from the worst of COVID-19 can be shielded from the worst of any economic lockdown. The entire economy and all of our tax revenue would have not to suffer as much with this scalpel approach instead of a blunter statewide edict, while public health will still be appropriately protected.

Transparency, Predictability & Hope:

To run a business, you need a plan, and it is hard to plan under the constant threat of unpredictable and unilateral restrictions from state government. Businesses need predictability, and making the rules and data that drives those rules more available to and understood by all will breed confidence and hope for businesses and consumers. A businessperson could see that the data is looking bad and they could brace for further appropriate and expected restrictions. A small business owner could see that the data is very positive and they could start planning for greater capacity. This improved data usage

available to all could eliminate a repeat of what happened this past July 4th weekend, when a last-minute reversal forced many restaurants to waste resources for a planned re-opening that never happened.

Potential Improvements:

NJBIA strongly supports this bill but does have an amendment suggestion to potentially improve it. It may be helpful to include a few other pieces of data in section 3a.(1) of the bill. To better understand the severity of the cases which is currently just covered in 3a.(1)(d), it may make sense to also include:

- the number of COVID-19 patients in the ICU or on a ventilator
- the number of COVID-19 deaths or deaths per 100,000

If COVID-19 deaths stay at the current lower rates in the state, county deaths may be too spread out and meaningless. But if deaths start to creep up everywhere, county deaths may be telling to see if COVID-19 is hitting a particular county and its more vulnerable population harder. NJBIA supports this bill regardless, but adding these data requirements makes this bill stronger.

NJBIA thanks you for your consideration of our perspective and asks for you to vote “yes” on this important bill that is both pro-business and pro-public health safety. Please let me know if you have any questions.