



[www.njbia.org/recovery](http://www.njbia.org/recovery)

Date: May 21, 2020

**Re: Critical Next Steps to Effectuate Business Preparedness to Reopen**

Dear Governor Phil Murphy, New Jersey State Senate and New Jersey General Assembly

From: New Jersey Business Coalition

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

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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](http://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](http://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.