

Minnesota Business Organizations Letter to Minnesota House of Representatives

June 4, 2020

Minnesota House of Representatives
Select Committee on Minnesota's Pandemic Response and Rebuilding

Dear Committee Members:

Small businesses are the economic fuel of our state's future. Nearly half of Minnesotans own or work for a small business and create two out of every three new jobs each year. On behalf of hundreds of thousands of small businesses and more than 60 local chambers of commerce across Minnesota, we urge you to work with Governor Walz's Administration to open all of the small businesses that have been sidelined since March 16th.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the business community has shared the responsibility of balancing the need for public health protections and economic impacts. Businesses that have remained open throughout this crisis have taken necessary steps to protect employee and customer health. *Small businesses across our state have done the same and are ready to re-open now.* Without decisive action, many will be lost. This is not simply a personal loss for business owners. This is a loss to the employees, their communities, the local governments and the state in terms of commercial and economic activity.

DEED Commissioner Grove has acknowledged that small businesses have borne a disproportionate amount of the economic burden. April employment statistics released by DEED show that compared to the same month last year, employment is down 73% in full-service restaurants, 63% in personal and laundry services, and 61% in arts, recreation and entertainment. SBA statistics reveal that these industries have among the highest shares of small business employment in our state's economy.

We ask you to recognize that these businesses have designed plans for safe work and customer environments and allow them to fully re-open by June 15th.

Other states in our region have offered clear guidance and dates for moving ahead with re-opening or have already opened:

- Indiana's "Back on Track Indiana" plan has clear timelines if positive health outcomes are sustained. For example, on June 14th, retail stores and malls can operate at full capacity; dining rooms at 75% capacity; bowling alleys and other smaller entertainment venues at 50% capacity. By July 4th, personal services, gyms, bars and restaurants are open at full capacity and gatherings of 250 people are allowed including sports venues, conventions, festivals and state fair. <https://backontrack.in.gov/2348.htm>
- "Re-open Kansas" allows all businesses to fully re-open with adherence to health safety guidelines after June 8th. <https://covid.ks.gov/ad-astra-a-plan-to-reopen-kansas/>
- Iowa re-opened small retail boutiques, personal services, fitness facilities, entertainment venues and establishments serving alcohol (50% capacity limitation) in May.
- North Dakota small businesses including breweries, bars, restaurants, personal care services, retail and smaller entertainment venues have been open since May 1st.
- Wisconsin small businesses have been open (if not prohibited by local health orders) since May 13th.

As chambers of commerce, we stand ready to help ensure our members are prepared to open – that they have instituted health and safety protocols for their workers and customers and have a preparedness plan in place. We are confident in their ability to do the right thing and are working with them, each and every day to understand and employ best practices. In fact, we believe if allowed, will do it equally as well as their larger counterparts.

It's time to get Minnesota moving again, in the safest way possible for employees and customers, while protecting businesses of all sizes. Minnesota's long-term economic future is counting on it.

LOCAL CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE IN SUPPORT OF SAFELY OPENING SMALL BUSINESSES

Alexandria Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce	Laurentian Chamber of Commerce
Anoka Area Chamber of Commerce	Leech Lake Area Chamber of Commerce
Apple Valley Chamber of Commerce	Litchfield Chamber of Commerce
Austin Area Chamber of Commerce	Marshall Area Chamber of Commerce
Belle Plaine Chamber of Commerce	Melrose Area Chamber of Commerce
Bemidji Area Chamber of Commerce	MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce
Big Lake Chamber of Commerce & Industry	Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
Brainerd Lakes Chamber	New Prague Chamber of Commerce
Buffalo Area Chamber of Commerce	New Ulm Area Chamber of Commerce
Burnsville Chamber of Commerce	North 65 Chamber of Commerce
Cannon Falls Area Chamber of Commerce	Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism
Cold Spring Area Chamber	Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism
Cottage Grove Area Chamber of Commerce	Park Rapids Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce
Crookston Area Chamber of Commerce	Pipestone Area Chamber of Commerce & CVB
Dakota County Regional Chamber of Commerce	Princeton Area Chamber of Commerce
Delano Area Chamber of Commerce	Redwood Area Chamber & Tourism
Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce	Sauk Centre Area Chamber of Commerce
Eden Prairie Chamber of Commerce	Shakopee Chamber & Visitors Bureau
Edina Chamber of Commerce	Sleepy Eye Area Chamber of Commerce
Elk River Area Chamber of Commerce	St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce
Fairmont Area Chamber of Commerce	The Chamber Grand Forks & East Grand Forks
Fergus Falls Area Chamber of Commerce	Twin Cities North Chamber
Forest Lake Area Chamber of Commerce	Wabasha Kellogg Chamber of Commerce / CVB
Glenwood Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce	Waseca Area Chamber of Commerce
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce	White Bear Area Chamber of Commerce
Greater Mankato Growth, Inc.	Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce
Ham Lake Area Chamber of Commerce	Winona Area Chamber of Commerce
Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau	Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce
Hermantown Area Chamber of Commerce	
Hibbing Area Chamber of Commerce	
Hutchinson Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism	
La Crescent Chamber of Commerce	
Lake City Chamber of Commerce	
Lanesboro Area Chamber of Commerce	