

## Letter to Governor Walz from Chambers of Commerce across Minnesota

May 5, 2020

Dear Governor Walz,

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 70 local chambers of commerce across Minnesota, we urge you to consider a more rapid and equitable approach to safely open businesses of all sizes.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the business community has shared your concerns for the importance of balancing health and economic impacts. Businesses that have remained open throughout this crisis and those who are preparing to reopen and are taking steps to protect employee and customer health.

Small businesses are subject to financial and operating challenges that many of their larger counterparts are not.

- While many large companies or chain stores offer a mix of products, smaller, main street stores specialize in fewer types of similar products. For example, a community's flower shop may sell plants and arrangements, but the grocery store in the same community sells those items in addition to food.
- While many large companies may already offer online ordering or curbside delivery, small, main street stores will have to adjust their business operations to accommodate customers during this time. All at an additional cost.

Small businesses are innovative, nimble and adaptable. The sooner they are given a chance to fully reopen, the sooner they can start implementing their workplace practices and preparedness plans. And the more equity that is given to who is deemed "essential" will help them survive and compete in their communities. We believe all businesses are essential. We know you do too.

Easing Minnesota's stay-at-home order for retailers was a step in the right direction. However, DEED Commission Steve Grove acknowledged last week that small businesses have borne a disproportionate amount of the economic burden. Businesses throughout the state are preparing to fully return to work and taking steps to do so responsibly and expeditiously. We urge you to continue to recognize that businesses can and have designed plans for safe work environments and allow more businesses to fully return to work.

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 size. 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  
Anoka Area Chamber of Commerce

Apple Valley Chamber of Commerce  
Austin Area Chamber of Commerce

Bemidji Area Chamber of Commerce  
Big Lake Chamber of Commerce & Industry  
Blooming Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce  
Brainerd Lakes Chamber  
Buffalo Area Chamber of Commerce  
Burnsville Chamber of Commerce  
Cannon Falls Area Chamber of Commerce  
Cottage Grove Area Chamber of Commerce  
Crookston Area Chamber of Commerce  
Cuyuna Lakes Chamber of Commerce  
Dakota County Regional Chamber of Commerce  
Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce  
Eden Prairie Chamber of Commerce  
Edina Chamber of Commerce  
Elk River Area Chamber of Commerce  
Fairmont Area Chamber of Commerce  
Faribault Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism  
Fergus Falls Area Chamber of Commerce  
Forest Lake Area Chamber of Commerce  
Glenwood Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce  
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce  
Greater Mankato Growth, Inc.  
Greater Stillwater Chamber of Commerce  
Greater Wayzata Area Chamber of Commerce  
Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau  
Hermantown Area Chamber of Commerce  
Hibbing Area Chamber of Commerce  
Hutchinson Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism  
International Falls Area Chamber of Commerce  
Jackson Area Chamber of Commerce  
La Crescent Chamber of Commerce  
Lake City Chamber of Commerce  
Lakeville Area Chamber of Commerce & CVB  
Laurentian Chamber of Commerce  
Leech Lake Area Chamber of Commerce  
Litchfield Chamber of Commerce

Long Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce  
Lonsdale Area Chamber of Commerce  
Madelia Area Chamber of Commerce  
Marshall Area Chamber of Commerce  
Melrose Area Chamber of Commerce  
MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce  
Minnesota Chamber of Commerce  
Moose Lake Area Chamber of Commerce  
Mountain Lake Area Chamber of Commerce  
New Prague Chamber of Commerce  
Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism  
Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism  
Park Rapids Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce  
Pipestone Area Chamber of Commerce & CVB  
Princeton Area Chamber of Commerce  
Red Wing Area Chamber of Commerce  
Redwood Area Chamber & Tourism  
River Heights Chamber of Commerce  
Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce  
Sauk Centre Area Chamber of Commerce  
Shakopee Chamber & Visitors Bureau  
Sleepy Eye Area Chamber of Commerce  
SouthWest Metro Chamber of Commerce  
Springfield Chamber of Commerce  
St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce  
The Chamber Grand Forks & East Grand Forks  
Thief River Falls Chamber of Commerce  
Twin Cities North Chamber  
TwinWest Chamber of Commerce  
Waconia Chamber of Commerce  
Waseca Area Chamber of Commerce  
White Bear Area Chamber of Commerce  
Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce  
Windom Area Chamber of Commerce  
Winona Area Chamber of Commerce  
Woodbury Area Chamber of Commerce

cc: Senator Paul Gazelka  
Senator Susan Kent  
Speaker Melissa Hortman  
Representative Daudt