



Businesses are ready to restart our economy, keep us safe

June 9, 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 50 local chambers of commerce and trade associations across Minnesota, we urge you to open all businesses which have been sidelined since March 16.

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 which 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 fully 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 thousands of workers, 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. What's more, these workers have been furloughed and are collecting from an unemployment account which is projected to face a deficit by the end of June.

We ask you to recognize these businesses are ready. They are ready to return and have designed plans to safely return their workers and protect their customers. They are making incremental progress by being open at a small percentage of their total capacity, but that will not sustain any long-term success. They should be allowed to fully reopen no later than June 19.

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 business organizations, 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.

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.

MINNEAPOLIS READY COALITION IN SUPPORT OF SAFELY OPENING SMALL BUSINESSES

Alexandria Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce	Lonsdale Area Chamber of Commerce
Anoka Area Chamber of Commerce	Marshall Area Chamber of Commerce
Apple Valley Chamber of Commerce	Melrose Area Chamber of Commerce
Austin Area Chamber of Commerce	MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce
Belle Plaine Chamber of Commerce	Minnesota Beverage Association
Bemidji Area Chamber of Commerce	Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
Big Lake Chamber of Commerce & Industry	Minnesota Recruiting and Staffing Association
Brainerd Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce	Minnesota Trucking Association
Buffalo Area Chamber of Commerce	Minnesota Utility Contractors Association
Burnsville Chamber of Commerce	Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism
Cannon Falls Area Chamber of Commerce	Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism
Cold Spring Area Chamber of Commerce	Park Rapids Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce
Dakota County Regional Chamber of Commerce	Pipestone Area Chamber of Commerce & CVB
Delano Area Chamber of Commerce	Sauk Centre Area Chamber of Commerce
Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce	Shakopee Chamber & Visitors Bureau
Elk River Area Chamber of Commerce	SouthWest Metro Chamber of Commerce
Fairmont Area Chamber of Commerce	St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce
Fergus Falls Area Chamber of Commerce	The Chamber Grand Forks & East Grand Forks
Forest Lake Area Chamber of Commerce	Thief River Falls Chamber of Commerce
Glenwood Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce	TwinWest Chamber of Commerce
Greater Mankato Growth, Inc.	Wabasha Kellogg Chamber of Commerce/CVB
Greater Stillwater Chamber of Commerce	Waconia Chamber of Commerce
Ham Lake Area Chamber of Commerce	White Bear Area Chamber of Commerce
Hermantown Area Chamber of Commerce	Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce
La Crescent Chamber of Commerce	Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce
Lanesboro Area Chamber of Commerce	
Laurentian Chamber of Commerce	
Leach Lake Area Chamber of Commerce	

cc: Speaker Melissa Hortman, MN House of Representatives
 Representative Kurt Daudt, MN House of Representatives
 Senator Paul Gazelka, MN Senate
 Senator Susan Kent, MN Senate
 Commissioner Steve Grove, MN DEED