

May 9, 2020

Governor Tom Wolf  
Commonwealth Of PA  
508 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf,

As elected officials from across Lancaster County, we call on you to formally move Lancaster County from the “red designation” to the “yellow designation” of your COVID-19 Phased Reopening Plan immediately. We, as a county, are prepared to do so on Friday, May 15, 2020. We prefer to act with your cooperation, but we intend to move forward with a plan to restore Lancaster County.

As you have stated numerous times, one of the key goals of the stay-at-home effort was to ensure our hospitals and health care systems were not overwhelmed by COVID-19 patients. We can now report that this goal has been met and our hospitals have the capacity to handle the needs of our communities.

As of May 9th, Lancaster General Hospital has 43 COVID-19 patients, with six patients requiring ventilators and Ephrata Hospital has two COVID-19 patients. All hospital systems report an ample supply of beds and ventilators, so much so, that they are resuming normal operations. With the knowledge that our hospitals stand ready and able to provide the care necessary to protect our constituents, it is time for us to begin to look forward.

To do that safely, we will continue to work together and stay in constant contact with our health care professionals and industry representatives to stay in tune with the needs of our communities and be able to identify and swiftly respond to increased numbers in the event of a resurgence.

In fact, since the outset of the crisis, a working group consisting of representatives of all hospital systems in Lancaster County, the Hospital Association of PA, the Lancaster County Emergency Management Agency, County Commissioners, state legislative delegation, Congressman Smucker, the PA Department of Health, and others, has been established. The group convenes a weekly conference call to review data and metrics, discuss issues and ways to work together to solve concerns.

Lancaster County's world-renowned collaborative spirit and work ethic are being brought to bear in an unprecedented manner. Thanks to the direct allocation of \$95 million of CARES Act Title V funds, we have the financial resources to implement plans to:

- Protect the health, safety and welfare of the County,
- Maintain public service continuity of operations and emergency response, and
- Reopen and support the local economy so that individuals, families and businesses can once again thrive.

Attached please find draft framework for a Lancaster County COVID-19 Relief Fund developed by a County Commissioner to deploy the CARES Act Funds to advance these priorities. In addition, we understand the decision to reopen our economy means ensuring that our business community, the backbone of our economy, is ready from a public health and financial standpoint. To this end, we applaud the development of a Lancaster County Economic Recovery Plan by our Economic Development Company and Chamber of Commerce (see attached).

To assist with all our efforts, Lancaster County has hired a highly qualified Public Health Emergency Advisor (PHEA) to provide dedicated technical, administrative and logistical advice and assistance during the current COVID-19 public health emergency. The PHEA is embedded with the Lancaster County Emergency Management Agency and works directly with the health care systems, DOH, PEMA, local organizations and others to implement many aspects of the aforementioned plans and policies.

One of our areas of focus has been nursing home and long-term living facilities. Unsurprisingly, these facilities have become hotspots for this virus. According to current reports from our Coroner at the time this letter was written, Lancaster County has seen 207 total deaths due to COVID-19. Of those, more than 90 percent originated from long-term living or nursing home facility residents.

Unfortunately, the unilateral decision made by your administration and Department of Health to force nursing homes to accept COVID-19 patients without providing clear and concise policies and the appropriate oversight to ensure the safety of those patients and the residents of those homes has resulted in a spike in cases and deaths in those facilities. This strategy, or lack thereof, is shocking when every scientific report stated that older Americans are most at risk.

To that end, Lancaster County Commissioners have developed a four-pronged approach to dealing with the crisis by offering the following to these facilities:

- Testing of all residents and staff – through a contract with a lab, and with the guidance of health systems, we are offering COVID-19 testing of symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals.
- PPE –shortages have hindered effective spread mitigation efforts, so the County will offer supplies to the facilities.
- Decontamination cleaning – professional environmental cleaning companies have already completed decontamination of some facilities and are making it available to all facilities that request the service.

- Review of and training on spread mitigation measures by a health consultant. The Reserve Medical Corp Director completed this in the Mennonite Home; however, they do not have the bandwidth to handle the number of facilities we have in Lancaster County and suggested hiring private companies.

We will continue to do all that we can to help the residents and staff of these facilities and urge you to direct your administration to follow suit and put in place similar plans in other parts of the Commonwealth where such outbreaks are occurring. However, it is important to note that when appropriately accounting for the data from high risk populations that can be safely isolated and provided further protections, such as prisons and nursing homes, Lancaster County's positive cases drop dramatically.

Lancaster County, as well as many others across the state, has been patient. Residents have followed your orders and guidelines despite a lack of clear benchmarks or consistent application of your own actions. They have come together to support our essential workers, and our Amish community has made and donated thousands of masks to our Lancaster Health Center, churches, hospitals, prisons and retirement communities.

However, after many weeks without answers, without transparency, and without an end in sight, that patience is waning. The lack of answers from Secretary Levine during the hearings last week before the Senate of Pennsylvania offered no relief. In fact, Secretary Levine was asked multiple times why certain counties who have met your own metrics for reopening were not included in the original list of counties allowed to move to "yellow" in your COVID-19 Phased Reopening Plan. Each question was met with deflection that the Department would continue reviewing and discussing the individual counties.

Further, your administration has stymied all attempts at acquiring data and information that is critical to our ability at the local level to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 as well as the economic damage by the shutdown. This data should be communicated to our elected officials in the General Assembly and available either through existing public health law or under the state's Right To Know law.

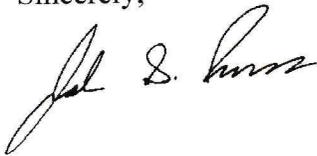
Case in point, the business waiver system you established created winners and losers all while keeping the public in the dark; the information released on Friday about this waiver program also clearly illustrates that the businesses and workers of Lancaster County are more than able to operate in the same safe fashion as those you arbitrarily chose at the beginning of this program.

Governor, we don't question your motives; however, given all that has unfolded over the past several weeks, we must question your methods. We have consistently called for a data-driven, collaborative and transparent approach to getting through this crisis. In refusing to do so, you have lost the will of many people to continue on the extremely narrow path you have outlined. And that serves no one well.

We believe we share the same goals: public health, safety, and an economy that can begin to recover so that individuals, families and businesses can once again thrive. Having faith in and working alongside local elected leaders, those closest to the people, is the only path forward. Otherwise, hope darkens and people suffer.

The time is now to begin restoring and rebuilding a strong Lancaster County. This is what our citizens want and deserve.

Sincerely,



Josh G. Parsons  
County Commissioner



Ray D'Agostino  
County Commissioner



Chris Leppler  
Sheriff



Lloyd Smucker  
11<sup>th</sup> Congressional District



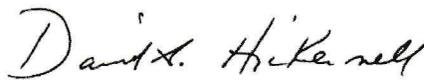
Ryan Aument  
36<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District



Scott Martin  
13<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District



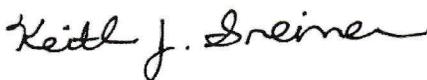
Bryan Cutler  
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Mindy Fee  
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