



May 18, 2020

Dear Berks County Delegation Members,

GRCA and its members greatly appreciate all of your bipartisan and collaborative efforts to inform and support our area businesses as we work through this crisis and beyond. The availability and accessibility of you and your staff, and the resources been shared on a daily basis have been invaluable to our members and the community at large.

In that spirit, we are reaching out to request your consideration for undertaking a bipartisan delegation hearing as soon as possible to review the current anti-COVID health and safety practices being employed by Berks County businesses and, most importantly, how such practices are or are not contributing to the spread of the virus locally. Clearly, Gov Wolf's continuing designation of Berks as a red county has forced countless businesses to remain idle and at risk. While that directive is well-meaning and has certainly helped prevent the spread of the virus in the past few past few months, it is likewise probable that strong health and safety protocols utilized by hundreds of operating Berks businesses are also helping to counter the virus' spread. Unfortunately, for the thousands of PA businesses that are now operating either as an essential business or via waiver, and are employing strong anti-virus measures, there does not appear to be any statewide nor local effort to actually collect health information and data from these operating businesses to determine if there is a specific workplace safety model that could be approved to allow thousands of more businesses to open up across the Commonwealth.

Consequently, we are hoping that the Berks delegation will lead the way for advocating for the revision of the Governor's restrictions on further business re-openings should the collection and analysis of comprehensive workplace data in fact demonstrate that adherence to strict anti-virus protocols helps reduce the spread of the virus. Experts at Johns Hopkins University, along with others, have recently been highlighting the ethics of reopening safely¹ and minimizing the collateral damage of the closures² due to the virus. To best start that effort here, we believe that a delegation fact-finding hearing ought to be organized in order to focus on:

- The extent to which Berks businesses are employing strict workplace protocols to fight the virus during operations;
- What success is being achieved by such practices in fighting the spread of COVID; and
- Based on such success, how that anti-virus protocol information and data can be utilized to demonstrate to Gov. Wolf that his stay at home directive can and should be modified to allow other Berks and Commonwealth businesses to open if they follow the same protocols.

Thank you very much for the great work you all are doing to represent the citizens and businesses of Berks County through these most trying times. We hope you will convene this suggested hearing as expeditiously as possible and we stand ready to assist you in that undertaking. Thank you!

¹ <https://bioethics.jhu.edu/research-and-outreach/projects/grappling-with-the-ethics-of-social-distancing/> "Grappling with the Ethics of Social Distancing: A Framework for Evaluating Reopening Policies;" Justin Bernstein, et. al., Johns Hopkins Berman Institute of Bioethics and the SNF Agora Institute; May 3, 2020.

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/14/opinion/reopen-america-coronavirus-lockdown.html?auth=login-email&login=email&smid=tw-share> "How to Reopen America Safely;" Dr. Marty Makary, surgeon and a professor of health policy at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health; May 14, 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Gerlach", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jim Gerlach
President and CEO, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance

CC: Commissioner Christian Leinbach
Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt
Commissioner Michael Rivera