

HURON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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May 27, 2020

Governor Gretchen Whitmer
PO Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer:

The Huron County Board of Commissioners recognizes and fully supports the tireless efforts of frontline healthcare workers and first responders, as well as workers in the service economy. Likewise, we appreciate the diligent efforts that you and your administration have taken to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus and promote public safety, while also protecting our state and local economies. With your guidance and leadership and the cooperation of our citizens, we have done our part to help “flatten the curve”.

Huron County has approximately 31,000 residents, and as of 3:00 p.m. on May 26, 2020 there were only 42 confirmed positive cases out of the over 55,100, or 0.0762% of all cases, in the State of Michigan. The Huron County Board of Commissioners understands that the virus is significantly more impactful in areas with high population density, and will disproportionately affect certain groups; however this Board believes that the time has come to start modifying the stay safe orders to allow our local businesses to reengage in commerce, putting people back to work and restarting our local economy.

As you know, Huron County has over 90 miles of Lake Huron shoreline with a major part of our economy made up of travel and tourism. Our campgrounds, hotels, restaurants, and bars are key components in job creation in the region. The travel and tourism industry, in Huron County, is a 3-month business, kicking off on Memorial Day and winding down on Labor Day. This compressed season employs a significant number of local residents, but also is a key income producer for high school and college students.

Executive action should not be based on the notion that “one size fits all”, and just last week you acknowledged that through Executive Order 2020-92. It is clear that actions necessary for Southeast Michigan are not necessary for the Thumb, the Upper Peninsula, or other regions. The Huron County Board of Commissioners would like to strongly encourage you to consider modifying your stay at home order for Huron County and the greater Thumb area. The Huron County Health Department is doing an outstanding job of mitigating, communicating, and recommending best practices as we move forward. Our local EDC’s have been working to identify best practices for safe conduct of commerce and providing that information to our impacted businesses by utilizing those businesses that have been able to remain open as essential businesses as their models. The businesses that have remained open have implemented safe operation methods to help maintain the health of their employees as well as their customers. Thus creating a work environment in Huron County that would allow for a safe re-opening of our businesses.

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In addition to travel and tourism, our region is also dependent on agriculture and manufacturing. Our manufacturing companies have been working to implement safety procedures once they are allowed to resume production. Using models developed by Lear and Ford, they have been working with their staff to follow safe operation protocols. Some of our local businesses, such as National Filter and Gemini Group, have pivoted to producing Personal Protection Equipment (PPE's). All focused on supporting our communities and the State of Michigan.

Our agricultural community has been working to implement safety measures that allow for safe planting, as well as safe grain handling as they help address some of the food bottlenecks that have developed over the past several months.

Local and regional flexibility is now appropriate. Our businesses and jobs are essential to Huron County and the State of Michigan. If we and the similarly situated counties are held to the same standards as the handful of counties in which COVID-19 is most prevalent, there will likely be irreparable damage to our economies and to the entire state. We are ready to restart our local economy. We trust the vast majority of our business owners and citizens to act responsibly.

In summary, the Huron County Board of Commissioners urges you to move forward with an objective, transparent, science-based plan of action for re-opening our economy with close coordination of local governments, healthcare providers, and public health leaders. This Board also respectfully requests that you recognize that Huron County is not similar to Saginaw, Bay City, or Flint, therefore our County should not be included in a region with those areas.

Sincerely,



Sami Khoury
Chairman

cc: Representative Phil Green
Senator Dan Lauwers