



New Hampshire
State Commission on Aging

May 7, 2020

Governor's Economic Re-Opening Task Force
107 N. Main Street Concord, NH 03301

Dear Members of the Governor's Economic Re-Opening Task Force:

Thank you for the difficult work in which you are engaged.

The people of New Hampshire are relying on you, as members of the Governor's Economic Re-Opening Task Force, to lead us through the challenges that lie ahead. We are relying on you to keep all of us safe, minimizing economic hardship and physical harm as this pandemic continues in our communities and affects our families in a multitude of ways.

The New Hampshire Commission on Aging is committed to supporting action that benefits all people in our communities, across the life span. We look to the Re-Opening Task Force to reinforce the reality that we are all in this together. This pandemic is not just about one subset of our population, but all of us. And together, we can find a way forward, a new normal in the ways we conduct business and interact with each other in community as this virus continues in our midst for the many months, possibly years to come.

A successful re-opening will be marked by our success in continuing to flatten the curve. We must guard against public sentiment interpreting re-opening as an indication to relax efforts to reduce disease transmission. Now is the time for increased vigilance by all of us to slow virus spread. With your leadership, all of us in the Granite State need to understand that when in public we must keep our physical distance as best as possible, wear cloth face coverings and regularly wash our hands and use hand sanitizer to protect each other from illness. These practices will limit the number of people of all ages that become ill, and ensure health care resources that we all depend on remain accessible to all. As businesses re-open, it is more important than ever for all of us to remain steadfast in these behaviors so we can optimize our communities' short- and long-term vitality.

Increased screening and testing are also key tools for re-opening businesses. A lack of screening tools (e.g., thermometers) and tests means a lack of information to make good decisions that slow the spread of the virus. Access to testing is particularly critical for direct care workers who provide services in people's homes and in our long term care facilities. Testing of this workforce will ease the minds of the people they serve and ensure these critically needed workers feel valued and cared for. Testing and screening are likewise important for other workers who interface with the public, in order to ensure safety and reduce spread. It is one of four strategies used to "box-in" epidemics, the other three being: isolation, contact tracing, and quarantining. Investments in each of these strategies is important for re-opening to be successful and for the long-term health and well-being of our state.

The New Hampshire Commission on Aging also wants to focus the Task Force's attention on the situation facing so many valued nonprofit agencies in our communities. Right now, New Hampshire communities are relying on nonprofit partners to buffer us against the worst impacts of the outbreak. We all will continue to rely on the expertise and experience of these community-based institutions in the recovery effort that lies ahead. Unfortunately, many fundraising events that sustain these organizations throughout the year have been disrupted by the outbreak. Revenue is significantly down and need is up. We recommend re-opening efforts to encourage volunteerism and donations to shore up our nonprofit agencies and their capacity to serve when they are needed most. In addition, the Commission asks that consideration be given to offer to nonprofits already under contract with the state to have enhanced or flexed support in light of the role they are playing in our state's response.

Above all, the NH Commission on Aging recommends that the Governor's Economic Re-Opening Task Force show leadership by balancing the physical, mental and economic health and well-being of all Granite Staters, at every age and stage of life. Older adults need to be included in the social and economic recovery in ways that are responsive to their increased risk of negative outcomes as well as their right to participate in society as safely as possible. Encouraging businesses to make accommodations like separate shopping times is one example of how this can be done. Making improvements to high speed internet in communities that lack access is another that will address isolation felt by many. As you are prioritizing societal benefit when considering what to re-open, please be balanced. As you consider how to re-open childcare centers, please address the needs of adult day centers too. The closure of adult day centers has resulted in increased stress and burden on family caregivers, and cognitive, physical, and social decline of persons living with dementia. Like childcare centers, these services are vital resources for getting people back to work.

Every one of us, in every community needs to do our part to save lives and successfully bring back our economy simultaneously. We stand as a ready partner in that process.

Sincerely,



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