



May 12, 2020

The Honorable Roy Cooper  
Governor of the State of North Carolina  
Via E-mail

Dear Governor Cooper,

We are writing today to request that you convene the Council of State as soon as possible to discuss plans for reopening North Carolina's economy, with the understanding that we will be dealing with COVID-19 for the foreseeable future.

We all understand that shelter-in-place cannot exist forever. With the rest of the Southeast, and the majority of our country, already providing structure and clarity to struggling businesses and workers, North Carolina is lagging in communication. Many of our offices are being flooded with phone calls from businesses that thought they'd be allowed to open after May 1. You are now telling them they have to wait at least another two weeks, with minimal guidance from you. As a majority of the Council, we are asking that you convene the Council of State as soon as possible so that we understand your plan for North Carolina. We also need the ability to provide clarity to businesses across our state that are dangerously close to permanently closing. And we need clarity as to why you aren't allowing specific industries to open as our neighboring states have done.

To date, over 1 million North Carolinians — many in the restaurant and hospitality industry — have filed for unemployment, and less than 45% of them have received any assistance. It is heartbreaking to hear the unending high volume of phone calls many of us receive daily from hopeless citizens down to their last few dollars. There are numerous ways to protect lives and livelihoods at the same time while allowing healthy North Carolina citizens to return to work and giving them the ability to provide for themselves and their families. We would like to discuss, as a Council, provisions relating to restaurants, salons & barbershops, entertainment small businesses, church and worship services, and hospitals and health care.

We understand that you've stated in the past you are using the White House's guidance for reopening North Carolina. However, it is just that — guidance for the entire country, not a law or a mandate, and it allows maximum flexibility down to the county level. The fact that North Carolina is faring better in cases and deaths on a per-capita level than the rest of the nation, and that the majority of deaths are from government-regulated congregate living centers, proves that our citizens can properly social distance and abide by COVID-19 business regulations. The citizens of North Carolina, especially those in need of protecting their livelihoods, are looking to our state leaders to come together and reopen responsibly as soon as possible.

We look forward to working with you, Secretary Cohen, and the rest of the Council of State on how to safely and strategically reopen North Carolina.

Sincerely,

Lieutenant Governor Dan Forest  
Commissioner of Agriculture Steve Troxler  
Commissioner of Insurance Mike Causey  
Commissioner of Labor Cherie Berry  
Superintendent of Public Instruction Mark Johnson  
Treasurer Dale Folwell