



Bedford County Commissioners' Office

COUNTY OF BEDFORD
200 SOUTH JULIANA STREET
BEDFORD, PENNSYLVANIA 15522

TELEPHONE: 814-623-4807 FAX: 814-623-0991

JOSH LANG, *Chairman*
BARRY L. DALLARA, *Vice-Chairman*
DEB BAUGHMAN, *Secretary*

DEBRA K. BROWN
Chief Clerk

May 11, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To All Bedford County Residents: We are publishing this press release to clarify the role of county government as it relates to the COVID-19 Pandemic Emergency. We are aware that several counties are openly defying the Governor's restrictions. As County leaders we will continue to push for all businesses to be allowed to be open immediately by following responsible safety guidelines. The County Commissioners previously petitioned Governor Wolf to move Bedford County to the yellow phase. This will occur on May 15th, but unfortunately certain industries will still have to remain closed under this phase. We will continue to lobby the Governor to treat all businesses fairly.

The state of emergency declared by Governor Wolf on March 16, 2020 also extends additional broad powers to the Governor. The County Commissioners, the County Sheriff, nor the County District Attorney have the authority to waive any civil or administrative penalties imposed by state agencies. Many of the industries have to comply with the PA Liquor Control Board and other licensing agencies that we have no jurisdiction over. Executive orders deemed by citizens to be unlawful or unreasonable must be litigated in court to be overturned. It is obvious many citizens feel that some restrictions have not been reasonable and not been imposed in an equitable manner.

We are continuing to use all recourse available to us to convince the Governor that all County businesses that are complying with social distancing, wearing masks and limiting occupancy in their stores, salons, or restaurants should be allowed to open immediately. As a County, we have achieved moving from red to yellow phase, which will allow additional businesses to open on May 15th.

While the intent of his executive orders may be based on stopping the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the collateral damage imposed on those who have lost jobs and businesses is creating unprecedented economic damage. As County Commissioners, we have been lobbying at the state and federal level for additional support for businesses in Bedford County.

County government cannot authorize any person or business to defy the Governor's executive orders. We strongly believe our citizens need more than two choices, either defy the governor or declare bankruptcy. We want our residents to know that we will be sympathetic to every extent possible, however individuals must be prepared to deal with consequences if they fail to comply.

We urge business owners who may choose to ignore the Governor's mandates to seek legal counsel prior to doing so. Please consider the following questions if you take this path: Will your insurance coverage, such as liability and workers compensation insurance remain in effect? If you have a state issued license will it be in

jeopardy if you ignore the mandate? The PLCB is a State Agency with the powers outside of our jurisdiction that could suspend your license without even a hearing. Will you have enough financial resources to defend yourself against the onslaught of state agencies that have the power to keep your business in court for a very long time?

Help us help you by telling Governor Wolf the tradeoff doesn't need to be between lives and an open economy. The goal must be both as much as possible. Refine the restrictions and allow every business the opportunity to open its doors by committing to the safety rigors we know how to implement.

The Governor should now turn his attention from restrictions to providing more personal attention to supplying more protective equipment throughout the Commonwealth, greatly increase testing, build surge capability and capacity to deal with flare-ups, to ensure hospitals are not overwhelmed, and protect our most vulnerable.

For up to date COVID-19 resources please visit www.bedfordcountypa.org. All County offices will be open to the public beginning May 15th. The County is following CDC and PA Department of Health guidance within the County courthouse. The only entrance to the building will be the Lafayette street entrance.