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The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of the State of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
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April 24, 2020

Governor Abbott:

On behalf of our constituents, we urge you to fully reopen the Texas economy. You have had to make many hard decisions—all of them made based on your love for our great state and keeping its people safe. But now, with the Texas Workforce Commission reporting that over 1.7 million Texans have filed for unemployment relating to COVID-19 job loss, oil prices falling to devastating lows, calls to suicide and substance abuse hotlines on the rise, and the overall mental health of Texans in increasing jeopardy, our constituents demand that the economy be opened back up *today*. A substantial percentage of the Texas working-age population is now out of work, and the longer we wait to reopen, the longer it will take for us to recover. Texans across the state are voluntarily practicing social distancing. Using proper care and common sense, we can begin to get back to our normal lives. We have written some of our thoughts below on potentially effective ways to open the state while remaining sensitive to the fact that many are still vulnerable:

General Guidelines

- Vulnerable Texans should continue to voluntarily quarantine
- Those testing positive for COVID-19 should still be subject to a 2-week quarantine
- The guidelines you announced should be a “ceiling” rather than a “floor”—that is, local governments should have the freedom to relax state mandates should they see it fit to do so, but they may not impose stricter measures than your Executive Order calls for. Only in the most severe cases should exceptions be made, and only then on an individual basis.
- Remove the distinction between “essential” and “non-essential” businesses—all jobs are essential

Long-Term Care Facilities: According to HHSC, over 40% of the COVID-related deaths in Texas come from cases in long-term care facilities. The figure is likely higher than this as it does not factor in the number of deaths that have occurred in independent senior living communities not reporting to HHSC. With so many of these severe cases occurring in these communities, we should:

- Isolate and fortify these facilities—both public and private—to the greatest extent possible
- Impose the most stringent testing and precautionary measures on all who enter or leave these facilities to decrease community spread and mitigate the risk to vulnerable Texans

Retail Establishments: Retail business owners know full well that reopening without proper precautions will likely drive customers away. Small businesses across the state have expressed readiness to implement the following measures necessary to keep Texans safe:

- Sending employees home who display symptoms of COVID-19
- Limiting the number of people allowed into the businesses at any time
- Increasing the frequency and efficacy of sanitization measures
- Enforcing 6-foot social distancing spacing measures, such as marking floors for customers to use as a guide

Restaurants: Restaurants may also reopen using proper social distancing and heightened hygiene requirements. We are not alone in this sentiment—as you know, the Texas Restaurant Association presented this week their “Texas Restaurant Promise” to you, outlining safe ways they can immediately reopen. Restaurants can adopt the same measures outlined above for retail establishments, as well as:

- Remove commonly-shared items from tables (such as salt shakers, ketchup containers, etc.)
- Restricting table use to a limited number of people
- Sanitizing chairs and tables after each use
- Providing hand sanitizer at each table
- Providing disposable utensils and menus to be discarded after use
- Eliminating cash transactions and encouraging touchless pay options

Taxes & Regulations: Your waiving of many of the regulations that stood in the way of effective COVID-19 mitigation is something of which all Texans were grateful. Other states that did not implement such waivers are not faring as well as Texas. Texas should:

- Continue to waive these unneeded regulations until the Legislature has an opportunity to debate whether they should be reimplemented (thus, they should be suspended until the Legislature either successfully or unsuccessfully passes these measures—through the end of session, or earlier should these items be recommended by you as emergency items)
- Implement a two-week long sales tax holiday to help jumpstart the economy

Governor Abbott, these are but a few recommendations we can implement to open up Texas’s economy *today*, and we make these recommendations in earnest. Too many jobs have been lost; too many sit at home as their livelihoods wither away, uncertain if they’ll be able to pay their mortgage or buy groceries next week. We must rebuild this economy by allowing those who built it in the first place to reopen.

We again thank you for your dedication to our state. Texas led this nation out of the Great Recession—let’s lead the nation out of this one too.

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