



## OHIO SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

April 24, 2020

Mike DeWine  
Ohio Governor  
Riffe Center  
77 S High St 30<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Covid-19 Priorities

Dear Governor Mike DeWine,

We ask you to consider our top priorities for when and how to “reopen” our state. Our number one priority as a state must be to protect the health and safety of all Ohioans. We oppose any plan that disproportionately prioritizes the economy over people’s lives. The best approach to promote the economic health of Ohio is to make sure that health and safety benchmarks are in place, and that necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and sanitation supplies are available to workers, employers, and customers in sufficient quantity. We are mindful of the hardships that the current “stay at home” situation has caused. But reopening the state too soon could negate the sacrifices of those who have missed going to school, lost their livelihoods, and put their lives on hold for the greater good.

Our most fundamental concern is the lack of access to testing and health care. This is especially true regarding Ohio’s most vulnerable citizens, many of whom live in low-income communities that lack the resources to successfully resolve COVID-19 hardships in both the near and long term. Wide-spread testing is still not yet occurring. While we commend your efforts to wisely use scarce testing resources, we need a supply solution – not ongoing scarcity management. Testing must not only be available to those with perceived health needs, but in sufficient supply to provide significant sampling across the state, especially considering racial, geographic, and economic disparities among our communities. The state should not fully “reopen” until there is adequate testing and enough data has been collected on the actual size, scope and spread of the virus in Ohio.

In order to support Ohio’s most vulnerable citizens and those who have high likelihood of contracting COVID-19, Ohio needs to provide assistance and resources for the agencies that serve this vulnerable population. These needs range from the ability of hospitals to continue

operating under the pressure of a potential surge to the ability of local non-profits to help families access food and childcare.

In addition to ensuring comprehensive access to testing, health care, and social services, the following must be considered before the state of Ohio begins to allow more business activity and more contact between our residents:

- Guidelines for businesses proportional to the size of the business, that are well publicized for employees and consumers on the state's COVID-19 website;
- Whistleblower protections for employees who report violations of COVID-19 safety guidelines at work. Employees should be able to confidentially report such infractions without fear of retaliation;
- Accommodations for employees who have childcare needs, especially as long as our schools, day cares and presumably summer camps are closed;
- Required use of masks in public spaces;
- Continued work from home status for any employees who are able to telework or for those with high-risk factors among the people in their care;
- Adequate PPE and sanitation supplies – there are not enough PPE and sanitation supplies for essential businesses and health care facilities at this time.

This pandemic has focused the consciousness of our nation and our communities on profound disparities within our society. These disparities range from the low wages paid to essential food and grocery workers who have kept our communities fed, to the unmistakably higher infection and death rates among our minority communities.

The way that we move forward as a state must be reassuring to consumers and workers. Undoubtedly we do not want consumers to be afraid to shop or workers who are unproductive because they don't feel safe and are afraid of losing their jobs if they blow the whistle. We must build upon the heightened level of cooperation and sense of community that Ohioans have displayed. We can proceed in the most inclusive way possible by ensuring that those involved in the decision-making represent the diversity of Ohio's people and perspectives.

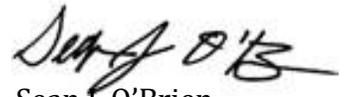
Sincerely,



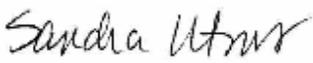
Kenny Yuko  
Minority Leader  
25<sup>th</sup> District



Cecil Thomas  
Assistant Minority Leader  
9<sup>th</sup> District



Sean J. O'Brien  
Minority Whip  
32<sup>nd</sup> District



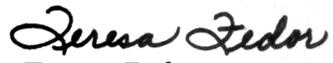
Sandra Williams  
Assistant Minority Whip  
21<sup>st</sup> District



Nickie J. Antonio  
State Senator  
23<sup>rd</sup> District



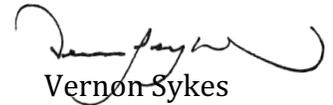
Hearcel Craig  
State Senator  
15<sup>th</sup> District



Teresa Fedor  
State Senator  
11<sup>th</sup> District



Tina Maharath  
State Senator  
3<sup>rd</sup> District



Vernon Sykes  
State Senator  
28<sup>th</sup> District