



Ottawa County

Board of Commissioners

Roger A. Bergman
Chairperson

Matthew R. Fenske
Vice-Chairperson

May 26, 2020

Honorable Gretchen Whitmer
Governor
State of Michigan
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Re: Status Report and Suggestions on COVID-19 From Ottawa County

Dear Governor Whitmer:

This is a follow-up to our April 15, 2020 letter and a repeat of our constructive input as to the next steps that we believe need to be taken in Ottawa County as we move forward with our State's COVID-19 response.

As we said in April, we appreciate the difficulties of your job on this issue, the success of much of what you have done in addressing the crisis here in Michigan, and know that you have the best interests of our State in mind. We are proud, as you must be, that Michigan is one of the few states where COVID-19 infections appear to be declining as we write. Further, we were happy to see you adopt a regional approach to the State's COVID-19 response in light of the relatively few infections in Western and Northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula. You will recall that we urged you in April to adopt a regional approach.

While we were planning to open our facilities on June 1, 2020 to the walk-in public, as long as they wore masks and passed COVID-19 screening stations, in a spirit of cooperation to your actions on May 22, 2020, we have put that date off now in the face of your latest extension of the "Stay Home and Stay Safe" Executive Order to June 12, 2020. Finally, we fully understand that states of emergency will have to be extended at some level to protect nursing homes, jails and other operations which are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19's spread. We are extending our own local state of emergency to aid our operations in justifying specific, County COVID-19 measures.

That having been said, we urge you to end the "Stay Home and Stay Safe" Executive Order on June 12, 2020 for several reasons:

1. First, there is a growing loss of credibility and belief in the "Stay Home and Stay Safe" Executive Order because it is illogical that Meijer and Home Depot can be open but car showrooms

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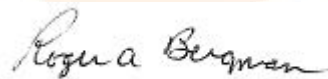
cannot; that you can sit at a bar in Manistee but not in Ludington or Grand Haven—assuming proper safety precautions; that you can sit on the beach in a crowd but not attend church—again leaving to the congregation and clergy the responsibility for safe services. As we are sure you understand, if credibility in these measures and goodwill are lost, then general public compliance and proper safety precautions will tend to be thrown to the wind. That poses a significant threat to Michigan’s recovery.

2. Second, our governments, retail and restaurant industries need consistency and a fixed date by which to perform effective planning. As we said, we were preparing our employees and facilities for a staged reopening on June 1st. Your order on May 22nd threw a wrench into that planning. We live in an area where boating, camping and tourism is very important. Restaurants cannot staff and buy food to prepare unless they have a realistic end date and then the State sticks to it. Candidly, most people here in West Michigan figured that end date was May 28th, and the extension was a deflating and, frankly, demoralizing impairment of careful planning.

As in April, we offer this letter, not as criticism or complaint, but rather in the spirit of our partnership with you. We know that the need for COVID-19 precautions has not ended with the cold weather and will continue. We have canceled the Tulip Festival this Spring and the Coast Guard Festival in July as a result. However, our community is ready to be trusted with the reality that we will have to live with a new “normal” until a vaccination or treatment is in place.

Our eleven-member Board of Commissioners unanimously directed me to send this letter to you. In a nutshell, the residents in Ottawa County are ready for the next step in the resumption of our lives, and we urge you to recognize that fact and end the “Stay Home and Stay Safe” Executive Order with this latest and, we trust, last extension.

Very truly yours,



Roger A. Bergman, Chairperson
Ottawa County Board of Commissioners

Cc: Ottawa County Board of Commissioners

