



## **A Responsible Restart for Ohio**

*Recommendations from House Democratic Caucus*

### **SUMMARY**

As we begin this incremental process of “re-opening” our state, we must proceed with caution. As Governor DeWine said, ‘We save our economy by first saving lives and we do it in that order.’ While Ohioans have successfully flattened the curve by staying home, there is a very real risk for a second spike if we are not cautious moving forward. There is proof that countries who have not put in place adequate procedures have found themselves in a second surge where illness and deaths spiked.

House Democrats are committed to getting Ohioans back to work, but maintain that relaxing of social distancing measures without proper precautions will lead to more death. As a result, we believe the state should follow the federal Center for Disease Control Guidelines for Reopening America. We must follow the advice of medical experts which suggest to maintain social distancing until there are 14 consecutive days of decreasing incidences of infection before starting the process to “re-open.” We must ensure that everyone feels safe re-engaging in society by ensuring that there’s a clear plan and everyone knows what to expect from the business they patronize and the places where they are employed.

Based on the testimony heard during the task force proceedings, coupled with the feedback we are receiving from our own constituents and local experts, we have identified 10 main areas that Ohioans need to hear clear plans if we are to “re-open.” We welcome the opportunity to work with our legislative colleagues on the other side of the aisle as well as the governor to create a framework for a responsible restart for Ohio.”

These 10 main areas of focus include:

1. Testing
2. Tracing
3. Hygiene
4. Childcare
5. Vulnerable populations
6. Worker protections
7. Consumer Confidence
8. Support for business
9. General Election
10. Public Awareness

## MAIN AREAS OF FOCUS:

- 1. Testing:** The ability to safely diagnose, treat and isolate COVID-19 cases and their contacts in a timely fashion.
  - Symptomatic and asymptomatic Ohioans
  - Use of “health action zones” to prioritize testing of high-risk populations
  - Antigen testing- WHO cited people who have been infected with COVID-19 are not necessarily immune from getting the virus again
  
- 2. Tracing:** With adequate testing the state can then start tracing individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 and implement strict isolation practices to prevent the spread throughout the community
  - Development of a robust workforce that can perform the tracing work. (There’s a formula for this)
  - Developing isolation protocols (including family members and multi-generational homes) and a method for enforcing compliance
  
- 3. Hygiene:** Mundane tasks like hand-washing, sanitizing surfaces and laundering one’s clothes have been shown to greatly diminish the spread of the virus and should be a vital part of any defense plan.
  - Public hygiene must be sharply improved and deep cleanings on shared spaces should become routine
  - Face masks should still be worn while in the community to reduce the risk of asymptomatic spread and should be mandatory in public places that are indoors.
  - Businesses, schools and entities must receive guidelines prior to re-opening for proper hygiene, occupancy, temperature tests and safety protocols supported by the Ohio Department of Health to enhance consumer confidence and keep employees safe
  - Ensure COVID-19 safety and social distancing practices are posted in all stores in languages all employees can read.
  - Allow local government projects to install hand sanitizer stations and other preventive hygienic devices to be eligible for state grant dollars.
  
- 4. Childcare:** Since schools are out for the remainder of the year, day care centers are closed, and many summer camps have cancelled, parents and caregivers will need a plan on how to ensure their children will be cared for when businesses re-open.
  - Employers should be flexible with employees who have childcare needs
  - Plan for opening daycare
  - Ensure childcare is available and affordable, and that payments to providers are timely.

- Use great caution before returning students to school buildings to avoid public health and economic consequences.
- 5. Vulnerable populations:** Certain populations are being disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and require additional attention and resources.
- For older adults, those with underlying health conditions, and other populations at heightened risk from COVID-19 need to continue limiting time with the community.
  - More sophisticated data that identifies racial disparities and at risk-communities for target interventions and resources.
- 6. Worker protection:** People must feel safe returning to the workplace. We recommend the following safeguards be implemented.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
  - Paid sick/family leave
  - Appeal process for employees who are at high-risk for illness, ability to keep them at home if they can stay home
  - Health insurance
  - Ensure frontline workers have access to PPE, hazard pay (including expanding Workers' Compensation to cover all employees who contract COVID-19 working outside the home), paid sick leave, and other worker protections, such as Occupational Safety and Health Administration safety standards.
  - Create enforceable employer policies that include:
    - ✓ Temperature checks.
    - ✓ The ability for employees to stay home when sick.
    - ✓ Provisions for adequate PPE.
    - ✓ PPE (including masks) be worn indoors.
    - ✓ Special accommodations for at-risk populations.
    - ✓ Occupancy limits.
  - Enforce mandatory breaks for sanitization and hand-washing.
  - Temporarily expand telework opportunities for high-risk staff or those whose job duties that can be done remotely to reduce in-person staff size as much as possible
- 7. Consumer Confidence:** In order to have a successful economic recovery, we must restore consumer confidence and have measures in place to keep people safe. Consumer behavior will likely be different and businesses need to adjust their operations accordingly.
- Clear communication to consumers on preventative measures that have been taken to keep them safe through signage, physical markers, social media and other forms of communication.
  - Prohibit price-gauging.
  - Expand broadband and cellular services across the entire state.

- Reduce in-person interactions as much as possible. Continue to utilize teleconferencing and video conferencing in the workplace where applicable.
- For those face-to-face interactions that must occur, maintain a minimum six-foot physical distance.

**8. Support for Business:** Many small businesses will be at risk of closing their doors permanently and we must help those who need it most.

- Create a grant program to provide support to restaurants, bars, and other small businesses in the hospitality industry to help cover utility, rent, insurance, and payroll costs.
- Enhance existing state programs, such as the minority business bonding and direct loan programs, and the capital access program, to help small and minority-owned businesses acquire resources necessary to grow.
- Support construction projects tied to previously appropriated funding to boost the state's economy by getting Ohioans back to work.
- Consider delaying or pro-rating liquor permit fees to assist bars and restaurants, as well as policies that may offset losses that result when businesses are forced to throw away perishable items.
- Ensure adequate personnel to inspect and enforce workplace safety standards, and assist and advise businesses with compliance.

**9. General Election:** We must learn from the mistakes of the March primary election and have a detailed plan in place for the fall.

- Prepare a contingency plan for the November election should strict social distancing still be necessary to stop the virus.

**10. Public Awareness:** Ohio needs a clear plan to share how to re-open the state to everyone.

- Culturally competent messaging through several mediums and languages to ensure that everyone understands what they should do and where to go should they have questions.
- Utilize trusted messengers to spread factual information through a variety of communications mediums including television, radio, print, social media, billboards, etc.