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April 30, 2020

Governor Tom Wolf  
Office of the Governor  
508 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Secretary Rachel Levine  
Pennsylvania Department of Health  
625 Forster St., 8<sup>th</sup> Floor West  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

RE: Independent Consideration of the Reopening of Wayne County

Dear Governor Wolf and Secretary Levine,

When we look at the reported number of coronavirus cases county by county, it is no surprise that counties on the periphery of the state-designated geographical regions are urging that their circumstances be considered independently when reopening decisions are made. After consultation with the commissioners and other county officials, we are convinced this approach is warranted in Wayne County.

There are a number of unique factors to take into account in weighing the case of Wayne County. Even though surrounded by New York, New Jersey, and counties hit hard by coronavirus, the Wayne caseload is remarkably low. Moreover, there is reason to believe that some of the problem is attributable to individuals seeking refuge from high caseload communities.

Because there are so many diverse agricultural interests in the county, the shutdown of nonessential industries has not had as great a local impact as for other areas. This is no quirk – the products and services are essential to other operations in the county. So far, this experience suggests, with proper precautions faithfully implemented, opening up other enterprises may not cause a setback to public health.

No one we have talked to is interested in side-stepping the crucial safety measures the state has required or strongly recommended. There is confidence in the partnership between health care and employers and organizations forged over years of cooperation. Wayne County has a well-developed health care network centered on Wayne Memorial Hospital. State government recognized both the challenge and the capacity of this facility when it was included in the first round for the rural health initiative. This effort is a signal success of your administration. No one anticipated there would be such a severe crisis to test the capacity of our health care providers, but here we are.

Having watched how rural communities have struggled to come back in the wake of the great recession, it is hard for many residents to accept being held back until the cities and suburbs are ready to

go. Effectively, that would worsen the competitive disadvantage they have felt both economically and policy-wise for a long time.

We remain committed to the principle included in recent, regrettably unsuccessful, legislation. That is for counties to be judged separately on their caseloads and economic circumstances. A regional determination strikes many as arbitrary and unfair. Workers and families believe this, as do the merchants and entrepreneurs who provide the economic lifeblood of small communities. To the extent that people can be safely allowed to return to work, it will in turn relieve some of the pressure on the overwhelmed unemployment compensation system.

We would be happy to provide any additional information or to discuss the matter further. Thank you for your consideration of this respectful request.

Sincerely,



Jonathan A. Fritz  
State Representative  
111<sup>th</sup> District



Lisa Baker  
State Senator  
20<sup>th</sup> District



Michael Peifer  
State Representative  
139<sup>th</sup> District