

Freeholder Holt To Gov: Clear The Roadblocks Get NJ Back To Work Again

Some Closed Businesses Can Put Health Precautions In Place To Operate

The Governor has to set more reasonable goals and requirements for opening the state up, so that Hunterdon County and New Jersey can get back to business, Freeholder Matt Holt announced at the Board's May 5th meeting.

Holt, the Freeholder Board's Economic Development liaison, stated, "Businesses that are still open have adapted to protecting people's health with directional signage, social distance marks on the floors, handing out sanitary wipes, mandatory face coverings, and plexiguard shields. Let's give closed businesses a chance to open and implement the same safety precautions to get our economy moving again."

The veteran Hunterdon Freeholder, who has served on the Board for thirteen years, said, "Governor Murphy has put forth parameters for re-starting the economy that, in my opinion, sets the bar too high – it sets up roadblocks and nearly unobtainable goals. Instead of creating roadblocks, the state should be looking to clear them, to get New Jersey back to work."

Holt stated, "We recognize COVID-19 is contagious and can be dangerous. That is why precautions must be taken with any business re-opening. But the Governor's plan is out of sync."

Called Restoring Economic Health Through Public Health, the plan requires 14 consecutive days of reductions in COVID-19 positive cases in the state. Yet the plan also calls for 20,000 tests per day statewide by the end of the month. But more testing will result in more positive tests, and with the increased testing we may not hit 14 straight days of decline in positive cases until sometime late in the summer or later."

Holt added, "And while the Governor's plan calls for increased testing, right now the Governor has not set up even one state test site – the test sites are all either county run or the two federal sites. Quite frankly the entire plan is frustrating as proposed."

Holt pointed out, "Here in Hunterdon County we're taking the steps necessary; we have a joint test site with Somerset County, our Health Department has made over 4000 tracing contacts, the Freeholders have approved an expanded municipal economic development grant program and have introduced a budget with no tax increase for the second year in a row, as part of our economic recovery plan."

Now it is time for the state to set more reasonable goals, to provide the funding to do the added testing and the contact tracing that is needed, and, even better, the state should set up a some state run test sites to help the counties out."

“We all know it will be sometime before we can go to a ball game, a concert, or even a movie theater. But with a more reasonable requirements, many of our businesses can re-open, bring people back to work, and begin the return to the new normalcy. We all look forward to it happening sooner, rather than later,” Holt concluded.