

For Immediate Release

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**CALIFORNIA COALITION FOR SAFE RE-OPENING PRESENTS SOLUTIONS FOR SECURE AND SUSTAINED REOPENING OF BUSINESS**

**COALITION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS INSIST CALIFORNIA CREATE LONG-TERM REOPENING PLANS, SIMPLE AND ENFORCEABLE PROTOCOLS AND SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES EVISCERATED BY CLOSURE ORDERS**

LOS ANGELES (July 28, 2020) – Following Governor Newsom’s order to temporarily close indoor dining and operations for restaurants in 19 counties less than a month after allowing them to reopen, a coalition of Chambers of Commerce and business associations throughout the state came together to formulate proposals for reopening California businesses in a logical and methodical manner that maintains the safety and health of customers, workers and the public. The California Coalition for Safe Re-Opening, building on previous efforts, proposed a Three Point Economic and Public Health Recovery Plan – immediate measures that should be considered prior to any more business shutdowns. With further closures and an expansion of previous closures coming in the weeks to follow, our 3 points below are more important now than ever.

Those measures include:

1. Expanded resources and empowerment of local authority in COVID-19 code enforcement and public safety agencies to supplement State & County Health inspection of businesses, schools, places of worship and other non-profits to help ensure safe re-openings.
2. Creation of a Safe Re-Opening Taskforce that would work directly with the State, County and Local officials to identify sustainable and long-term solutions to open and remain open during COVID-19. This would include mandatory rapid testing sites, recovery centers and implementation of a COVID-Safe Certification program which includes COVID Safe training for employees, PPE supplies and protocols instituted and implemented, spaces reconfigured for safe seating, protective barriers, and new technology and ventilation systems.
3. The creation of a California COVID-19 Emergency Business Interruption Fund to provide grants to businesses to cover expenses related to safe reopening in June 2020, as well as all losses including displaced revenue related to the July 1st closure order and future unanticipated closures.

The Coalition emerged over the last few months through unprecedented dialogue among local businesses, organizations and chambers throughout California, and their members, who, while understanding the necessity of closure orders in March, are frustrated with the lack of coordination of re-openings and the haphazard recent closure orders. The Coalition urges local and county governments to support the effort to promote safe, organized, methodical and long-term reopening schedules.

West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce Chair and La Peer Hotel General Manager, Nick Rimedio stated, “We’re asking our cities and counties to publicly join their small businesses in the call for a return to common sense that protects communities from well-intentioned, but economically devastating public policy.”

The Coalition believes that safe re-openings and customer confidence are undermined by the most recent and continued closure orders issued by Governor Newsom. The orders to close most indoor operations has created a volatile and toxic environment as restaurants, gyms, places of worship, nail salons, hair salons and barbershops, gyms and fitness centers and other office spaces were given no data showing that “indoor operations & dining” have had any specific correlation to the spike in coronavirus cases. Businesses require stability and predictability, and the public needs confidence and certainty. Simply put, the economy cannot survive in an environment of “open one month, close it down the next month”, which is a dangerous precedence that threatens to impact all businesses under the guise of the “New Normal”.

“We all appreciate and understand that health concerns have to take a priority,” said Pasadena Chamber CEO Paul Little, “but our businesses, especially our restaurants, need stability to operate. Being allowed to reopen only to be told a few weeks later they must close immediately which took significant investment on the part of people to create a safe environment for patrons and staff only for it to be flushed it down the toilet. How can we expect anyone to invest in reopening when they could be ordered closed less than two weeks later? We need to see a coherent, long-term plan for reopening. One that we can be confident will remain in place.”

The business community understands the serious responsibility of being safe and ensuring protection for their employees and customers. As outlined in point two of our 3-point plan, we feel that a Safe Re-Opening plan and taskforce could be consistent of a Certification program. This certification program could provide the confidence needed for both business and public. Certification completion could include COVID Safe training for all employees, PPE supplies and protocols instituted and implemented, spaces reconfigured for safe seating, plexi-dividers, or protective barriers, etc. Once completed, the County, along with city partners, could deem businesses a business accountable, and safe for employees and patrons. When COVID spikes again, instead of broad sweeping closures of industry sectors, only businesses who have not been certified would be impacted. This accomplishes several things – it allows the business who have safe environments to remain open, forces those that are certified “safe” to comply if they want to operate, and provides the public confidence that they are entering an establishment which is COVID safe.

Holly Schroeder, President & CEO of the Santa Clarita Valley Economic Development Corporation stated, “The Governor’s broad-brush order ignores regional differences within counties and the substantial actions individual businesses are taking to protect customers and employees. Businesses have spent considerable resources implementing required health protocols. The starting and stopping of these orders threatens their ability to continue operating and the livelihood of their employees.” We ultimately see the taskforce and certification addressing this.

Hollywood Chamber President/CEO Rana Ghadban further drives this point home. “With the tireless work of the LA County Economic Resiliency Taskforce, which many of our businesses serve on, to craft the language and protocols for reopening in concert with the business community's commitment of time, resources and finances to meet and exceed those requirements, most businesses have created an environment that are among the safest places for their employees and customers to be.”

“We understand that there are bad actors in the business, as there are with some individuals.,” stated Colin Diaz, President and CEO of the Culver City Chamber of Commerce. “These businesses should be held responsible for their actions and neglect. But, this sweeping policy that punishes the responsible business owners, many of whom have spent small fortunes bringing their businesses up to an extremely safe environment, further creates hardship and will continue to have drastic consequences beyond what we have already seen. We will lose a great deal of our small businesses with every round of closures that our government imposes on the business community.”

In the proposed plan, business returns with COVID-19-related protection practices in place, including enhanced cleaning procedures, distancing, and safe service protocols. Government must invest in resources necessary to ensure that County Health & Local Agencies are empowered in a way to ensure measures are being adhered to. There must be adequate access to regular COVID-19 testing and the state must partner with the business community to assist in access to funding COVID-19-related Emergency Business Interruption Fund to cover losses related to all government and health department orders including forced closures, social distancing requirements, and gathering limits.

“Elected officials at every level in our state need to understand that the health and safety of employees and customers is paramount to any responsible business owner,” said Genevieve Morrill, President and CEO for the West Hollywood Chamber. “They also need to know how tenuous the existence of almost every business in the state of California is right now.”

MORE ABOUT THE COALITION

The California Coalition for Safe Reopening consists of local chambers of commerce and business and trade associations. Responding to the current COVID-19 emergency, the Coalition advocates for safe, reasonable, and predictable reopening plans in California that ensure the health of every resident, worker, and customer.

List of the organizations

BizFed LA - Los Angeles County Business Federation Norwalk Chamber of Commerce

Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce Pasadena Chamber of Commerce and Civic Association

BOMA Greater Los Angeles Pomona Chamber of Commerce

California Restaurant Association Rancho Mirage Chamber of Commerce

Century City Chamber of Commerce Redding Chamber of Commerce

Cerritos Regional Chamber of Commerce San Pedro Chamber of Commerce

Culver City Chamber of Commerce Santa Clarita Valley Chamber of Commerce

Downtown Center Business Improvement District Santa Clarita Valley Economic Partnership

El Monte South El Monte Chamber of Commerce Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce

Glendale Chamber of Commerce Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce

Greater San Fernando Valley Chamber of Commerce Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce

Hollywood Chamber of Commerce Torrance Chamber of Commerce

JMC2 Engineering Tulare Chamber of Commerce

La Cañada Flintridge Chamber of Commerce Venice Chamber of Commerce

LAX Coastal Chamber of Commerce Valley Industry Commerce Association

Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce Yorba Linda Chamber of Commerce

Malibu Chamber of Commerce Westside Council of Chambers of Commerce

Monrovia Chamber of Commerce West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce

Murrieta Wildomar Chamber of Chamber West Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce

NAIOP SoCal Whittier Area Chamber of Commerce

