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Mask Wear the Best Way to Protect the Health of Your Workers, Your Business

Pennsylvania's re-opening map is almost solidly green at this point, with the only remaining county in yellow – Lebanon County – also set to head to the green phase this coming Friday, July 3. So what does this mean for the state's business community? As part of our "Bringing PA Back" initiative, the PA Chamber is working to provide those answers. Just last week, we hosted a free webinar (which you can access a recording of [here](#)) that addressed business owners' most pressing questions about the safe re-opening of their facilities. The event featured insight from Department of Economic Development Secretary Dennis Davin, key DCED staff, and McNees Wallace & Nurick LLC Partner Schaun Henry, who provided a legal perspective on the 'DOs and DON'Ts' that employers should be practicing at this time.

Even armed with this expert guidance and the information we're continuously updating on our "Bringing PA Back" website, employers' questions understandably linger about how they should operate in this unprecedented era. One of the issues that has become extremely problematic in recent weeks is mask wearing. For some time now, the Wolf Administration has promoted that individuals wear face masks in public to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. But there remains a lack of clarity as to whether such orders are enforceable. This has meant that while some businesses do not require mask wear as a condition to enter their premises, other businesses do – which has sown confusion and sometimes even animosity in communities statewide. Equally alarming is that some businesses that have been self-enforcing their own mask policy have been subject to lawsuits, with plaintiffs' lawyers claiming that their clients were told by a worker that they must wear a mask, even when a health condition should have exempted them from having to comply. [This is why the PA Chamber has joined many of our friends in the business, civil justice and healthcare community to fight for liability protections](#) for workers who are operating through this pandemic. We want them to be able to make the best possible decision to promote the health and safety of their employees, customers and patients, without the undue fear of lawsuits.

For our part, the PA Chamber believes that the Centers for Disease Control's latest guidance on personal protective equipment – which is that PPE is proven to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in public places – should be adhered to by businesses. We are putting this belief into practice with the requirement that all staff who are working in our building utilize face masks in any space that is not behind the closed doors of their own personal offices. We have also sanitized our entire building; adhere to social distancing; and have placed additional hand sanitizing stations throughout our facility. [The PA Chamber is also selling PPE to businesses](#) so that they can help to keep their employees, customers and communities safer. And we're telling employers that requiring PPE makes sense not just from a public health perspective, but from a business standpoint as well – as refusing mask wear opens up businesses to potential lawsuits and the loss of their insurance.

As I have often said, this is an extraordinary situation and it will take extraordinary measures to pull Pennsylvania out of it. In order to truly “bring PA back,” as we all collectively want to do, it will require everyone doing what is necessary to ensure the ongoing health of our communities – and that means following the public health guidelines that have been put in place.

Gene Barr

President and CEO

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*The **Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry** is the state’s largest broad-based business association, with its statewide membership comprising businesses of all sizes and across all industry sectors. The PA Chamber is The Statewide Voice of Business™.*