



May 20, 2020

The Honorable Governor Tom Wolf
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
508 Main Capital Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Commissioners

Zachary J. Haigis
President

Virginia M. Stump
Vice President

Jason L. Atwood

Fran Bevan

Brian Blasko

Eric Gass

Ronald A. Zona

Township Manager
Jeffrey F. Silka

Dear Governor Wolf,

On May 15, 2020, Westmoreland County was allowed to reopen in the in the yellow phase. This phase, while a small step in the positive direction, is still a crippling burden on local businesses and the economy. At this time, our township and county have suffered great economic distress due to the closure and limited operation of our numerous small businesses. Established small businesses in our community have closed permanently due to these conditions. The largest number of Westmoreland cases are in confined areas, including nursing homes, not where citizens are utilizing businesses that are open.

We, the Board of Commissioners for North Huntingdon Township, a First-Class Township in western Westmoreland County request you develop and release the criteria and timelines to move counties to green and then all open. Governmental leaders at all levels deserve to know what data will be considered to allow the path to total opening even while your own current criteria of low per-capita case counts, the ability to conduct contact tracing and testing, and appropriate population density to contain community spread are being met.

Our residents have shown their resiliency in the midst of this outbreak, drastically altering their lives in the name of keeping each other safe and healthy. We have proven that we follow the prescribed techniques in slowing and stopping the spread of this virus through proper hand washing, extensive sanitizing, covering of the mouth and nose with masks, and practicing social distancing. We have demonstrated that we know how to stay calm, safe, and healthy during this time. Our numerous small business owners have prepared to reopen by installing safety equipment and using measures to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Without question North Huntingdon Township and Westmoreland County have demonstrated its preparedness to reopen and met the qualifications to move to the yellow phase of reopening. Being served by UPMC, Allegheny Health Network, and Excelsa health systems, we have not seen any strain on the health care system in our area. Furthermore, our township, and neighboring boroughs of Irwin and North Irwin have a total of only 27 cases for over 30,000 residents or a rate of 0.09% since the initial outbreak.

The residents of the Commonwealth have shouldered the burden of the stay at home orders and business shutdowns by losing their employment and the ability to sustain their personal financial responsibilities. The safety net of unemployment insurance has failed to meet its basic responsibility of providing the benefits in a timely manner. We have stayed the course, kept safe and allowed the virus to dictate the actions, it is now time to be able to return to a normal social and economic life.

In conclusion, we implore you to provide the criteria and timeline that Westmoreland County, including North Huntingdon Township, can use to move from yellow to green and eventually all open.

Sincerely,

North Huntingdon Township Board of Commissioners



Zachary Haigis
Board President