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April 3, 2020

NC Retail Merchants Association
NC Petroleum & Convenience Marketers
NC Beverage Association
NC Chamber
NC Realtors
NC Restaurant & Lodging Association
NC Automobile Dealers Association
NC Manufacturers Association
NC Homebuilders Association
Farm Bureau of North Carolina
National Federation of Independent Businesses
HR, Compliance & People Development
Employers Coalition of North Carolina
The Employers Association
Alliance for Automotive Innovation
Carolinas AGC
Independent Insurance Agents of NC

Dear Representatives of the Above Listed Organizations,

On behalf of the N.C. League of Municipalities, I wish to commend you for looking out for the interest of businesses and business owners in this most difficult time. Our member cities and towns recognize that economic opportunity is key to their success, and are committed to helping local businesses survive through the depths of the crisis that we now face. We know that small businesses, in particular, are the lifeblood of many of our towns and cities, and that thriving businesses large and small are crucial to the future of the entire state.

We thank you for your letter of April 1 concerning restrictions while stay-at-home orders are in place and determinations related to essential businesses. We have shared these concerns with the 550 cities towns, and villages who are members of the North Carolina League of Municipalities, and know that many of them are working with the local business community to address them. As providers of essential services like public safety and water and sewer, cities and towns recognize that many private sector businesses also are essential to providing goods and services required of residents, especially in this time of need.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that locally elected officials are responsible for protecting the health and welfare of their residents, and that is of paramount importance today. Limiting the spread of this virus is the chief concern of municipal officials and it is important that they have the tools to do so. Our cities and

towns are very different – in size, in geography, in demographic make-up and in other ways. In trying to limit the virus’ spread, not all cities and towns will need to take the same approaches.

That being the case, I would like to bring to your attention a key concern expressed by locally elected municipal officials: While many retail businesses are posting and enforcing “social distancing” steps that help prevent the spread of the coronavirus, others are not. This public health gap is the primary driver of many elected officials considering a local shelter-in-place order for their community.

We hear that this is particularly the case for some of the “big box” retailers, and that large crowds are collecting at checkout counters and in other places in stores with no efforts to keep people separated. We would encourage you to encourage your members to enforce these rules, and to share this letter with them. Doing so will prevent the spread of the virus, keep people healthy, and ultimately do more to bring back economic activity in our state than any other step we could take.

We know that during this time of crisis that it is critical that all levels of government and the private sector work together to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and provide for the needs of North Carolinians. We know that in pursuing that goal, communication and cooperation between local officials and the business community must continue. We are committed to helping further that dialogue, and in doing so, address the evolving needs of our citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Meyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "M".

Paul Meyer
Executive Director
N.C. League of Municipalities