



*New York State*  
**REGIONAL  
RESTART**

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# *New York State* **REGIONAL RESTART**

On April 16, Gov. Cuomo extended the restrictions and closures of the “New York on Pause” order until May 15. With more than 240,000 positive cases of COVID-19, New York is the epicenter of the pandemic. Precautionary measures that promote social distancing and contain the spread of the virus are critical to our public health and safety.

However, protocols, executive orders, and mandates have been uniform for all areas of New York State. While everyone recognizes that preventative measures are critical to limit the spread of the virus, it is unreasonable to ignore the dramatic regional disparities within the state. The application of blanket requirements that disregard wide variations in the prevalence of COVID-19 must be reevaluated.

For example, the same “New York on Pause” protocols being utilized in Queens County (40,216 cases) also apply in Hamilton County (3 cases). As of April 19, New York State reported 236,732 confirmed cases of COVID-19. More than 92 percent of those cases were located in the downstate regions of Long Island, New York City, Rockland and Westchester Counties.

The COVID-19 virus is a statewide problem, but with strong regional disparities. As the governor’s business closures and stay-at-home orders apply to every region of the state, unfortunately so do the crushing financial impacts on employees, businesses and communities.

Within the past four weeks, approximately 1.2 million New Yorkers have filed unemployment claims. The amount of job losses has overwhelmed our system, and ascended to a point where state government cannot adequately process the flood of requests for help. By its own estimates, state budget officials have said New York State may face a \$10 to \$15 billion budget deficit.

We have been knocked down. It’s time we start to rise.

We believe we must plan for the regional re-opening of New York’s economy. Rather than extend additional lockdown orders, we need to look ahead, identify opportunities, and take gradual steps in a positive direction. We are calling on the state to develop a plan by April 30 that sets in motion “New York’s Regional Restart.”

Regional recovery will not be immediate, and should not be universal. But as collaborative initiatives are being made with other states, we cannot ignore our responsibility to look within our own borders and put our communities in a position to heal and succeed.

This does not represent the end of the COVID-19 threat, nor does it indicate precautionary measures should come to a stop. However, it does mean we are looking forward, we are committing to our future well-being, and we are acknowledging that the diversity of our state demands more than a one-size-fits-all plan for economic recovery.



## **POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- ◆ New York State must take a common-sense, regional approach to begin to restart the economy, and have a plan to take this step by April 30, 2020.
- ◆ Each region of the state has different levels of infection and of population density, creating the possible scenario where some areas are reopened while others remain closed.
- ◆ The New York State Department of Health, working in conjunction with county health departments, must establish a formula to permit the reopening of non-essential businesses in regions that have experienced low numbers of COVID-19 cases.
- ◆ Under this formula, DOH and local health departments would calculate a percentage of confirmed cases and hospitalizations over a two-week period per 1,000 residents.
- ◆ If that percentage is below a number determined to be safe by DOH, then non-essential businesses in that region should be permitted to reopen at 25 percent capacity for a two-week period.
- ◆ That capacity percentage would continue to increase every two weeks as long as infection rates remain flat or decline.
- ◆ The state should evaluate businesses' ability to implement proper social-distancing protocols, and establish risk levels for each in order to best protect workers and customers.
- ◆ Working in collaboration, state and local agencies would establish proper social distancing practices for businesses in each region to begin opening.
- ◆ Guidance on social distancing practices and a comprehensive list of all essential businesses would be posted on all major agency sites. A list of proper social distancing practices would include:
  - Ensuring business capacity maintains 6-foot buffer zones
  - Requiring face coverings
  - Prioritize opportunities to deliver services or products by appointment whenever feasible, rather than create the potential for customers gathering in lines, groups, or waiting rooms.
  - Prioritizing online payment over cashiers when feasible.
  - Requiring telecommuting when feasible to protect employees and customers.
  - Making hand sanitizer and/or wash stations available to employees and customers.
  - Utilizing school facilities for child-care with safety protocols in place.
  - Implementing a shut-off valve policy to immediately but temporarily close a business when employees come into contact with an infected person.
  - Allowing businesses still deemed non-essential to propose a social distancing plan to ESD and DOH for approval to reopen.



## **NEW YORK STATE REGIONAL RESTART PANEL**

- ◆ We urge that a panel of experts in economic development and healthcare be assembled immediately to develop a plan to begin to restart the economy, region by region. The “New York Regional Restart Panel” will be tasked with presenting a plan for a phased-in restart of the economy and re-opening of businesses no later than April 30, 2020. The mission of the panel will be to develop a plan that will focus on:
  - Restarting the state’s regional economies while keeping employees, consumers and the public safe.
  - Reevaluating non-essential businesses in regions with low or declining COVID-19 cases per capita, that could reopen and maintain proper social distancing practices immediately; and
  - Establishing proper public health metrics, thresholds, regional opportunities, and social distancing practices for businesses in regions beginning to open.
- ◆ The panel makeup will consist of:
  - President & CEO of Empire State Development
  - 10 Regional Directors from Empire State Development
  - Director of the Division of Budget
  - Commissioners of Health, Labor and Agriculture and Markets
  - One appointee each from the Assembly Speaker, Senate Majority Leader, Minority Leaders of the Assembly and Senate
- ◆ Representation of one individual from each of the following organizations:
  - Business Council of New York
  - NFIB-NY
  - Unshackle Upstate
  - Healthcare Association of New York State
  - Greater New York Hospital Association
  - New York Farm Bureau
  - New York State Association of Counties
  - New York Conference of Mayors

