



marylandnonprofits.org

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April 23, 2020

The Honorable Larry Hogan, Governor
State of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Safe Reopen Plan

Dear Governor Hogan,

We feel fortunate to live in Maryland at this time thanks to your strong leadership of our state's emergency measures to address the COVID-19 crisis. Your leadership of the National Governor's Association and in the media focusing on safety measures have been so important to reducing the spread of the virus.

We are concerned about the vocal minority in our state calling for premature lifting of executive orders to mitigate the crisis. Maryland Nonprofits is the statewide association representing nonprofit organizations, with more than 1,000 members. We are developing a public campaign to support the measures you have put into place to keep Marylanders safe and reopen the economy carefully when certain conditions have been met. The basic tenets of that campaign are attached, and we ask that you **please consider the 5 points in the attached #SafeOpen plan as part of your plan to re-open our economy.**

We would like the nonprofit community to be partners in your efforts to address the COVID-19 crisis on many levels as nonprofits are on the front line of providing healthcare, mental health, disabilities services, foster care, food distribution, senior care, and many other critical functions that are key to the health and safety of Marylanders. Maryland Nonprofits has mobilized nonprofits to reach out to members of Congress in support of stronger federal aid to the states which we know is critical in addressing serious budget shortfalls.

Thank you again for your leadership and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Heather Iliff
President & CEO



#SafeReopen AND #HealthyTogether

Prepared by Maryland Nonprofits for Public Awareness Campaign

We all want our economy to open to its full capacity and to have our communities be healthy and prosperous now and in the future. Safely reopening is dependent upon all of us working together to achieve the public health measures that will enable our society to interact safely with one another and prevent unnecessary illness and fatalities in addition to reducing the burden on the healthcare system. In the meantime, we need to stay #HealthyTogether.

#SafeReopen

Until there is effective treatment and/or vaccine, the following guidelines must be in place to reopen our economy:

1. **Vulnerable people have access to testing, care and treatment, a safe place to live/stay.** Truly, we are all vulnerable to COVID-19 and some people are more severely at risk and impacted than others. These include seniors, people with health conditions and compromised immune systems, people experiencing homelessness and poverty, people with disabilities, people who are incarcerated, people in residential facilities.

Structural and institutional racism have made the pandemic particularly dangerous for African American/Black people who are dying at far higher rates of COVID-19 than the general population. This may be caused by many factors, including higher rates of pre-existing health conditions and people delaying care due to lack of insurance or other reasons. Many Black men debate whether to wear a mask because of the danger that they may be racially profiled as a criminal if they do so. Some Black people have been refused COVID-19 testing even though they meet the testing criteria. Some have been asked to leave establishments for wearing a mask. Discrimination against Latinx, Asian Americans and other immigrants create heightened risks in all communities of color. People in the immigrant community may stay away from testing or healthcare facilities for fear of deportation or lack of health coverage.

2. **Everyone has access to personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves, cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer.**

Our communities are indebted to those who are risking their own safety in the midst of the pandemic to provide medical care and who work in front-line jobs such as grocery stores and food distribution, gas stations, and staff in residential facilities, public servants such as police, sanitary workers, and others. Personal protective equipment must be provided to all frontline workers and readily available in the marketplace to everyone.

3. **Ensure widespread access to testing and expand criteria to asymptomatic people prior to opening schools and other group settings.**

Immediate priorities for expanding testing to asymptomatic people include:

- a. Nurses, physicians and other healthcare providers, sanitation personnel and contractors.
- b. People working in residential facilities: homes for foster youth, people with disabilities, people with mental health needs, seniors, homeless shelters, mental health and substance use treatment facilities, jails and prisons, etc.
- c. People in front-line jobs: grocery stores, police, prison guards, public transit, restaurant workers, sanitary workers, gas station attendants, etc.
- d. Other essential workforces who interact with the public or specific groups

Re-Opening priorities for expanding testing to asymptomatic people:

- e. Children going to school and daycare, teachers and administrators
- f. College/University students, professors, teachers, and essential employees working on college campuses
- g. Retail workers, businesses and organizations open to the public
- h. Workplaces that require more than 10 people in close proximity
- i. Groups who are disproportionately dying, including African American/Black people, seniors, and other vulnerable populations

4. **Contact tracing for people who test positive.** This will help ensure that people who may have been in contact with an infected individual can then be safely quarantined to avoid further spread. Contact tracers must be diverse and inclusive of members of local communities who are trusted.
5. **Access to Safe Quarantine.** Quarantine facilities are needed for those who do not have access to safe quarantine including people who live in homes with many residents, people who live with abusers, people who are experiencing homelessness, people who are incarcerated, foster youth, and others. This is also an issue for healthcare workers and other direct care providers needing to protect their families.

All of the above measures are within our collective power to implement through sound public policy and by working together.

#HealthyTogether #OwnTheCurve

Until we can have a #SafeReopen, physical distancing policies must remain in place, and it is incumbent on all of us to follow the guidelines and help people and communities who are in distress. It's not just a 5-point plan, it's an infinity-point plan to do what it takes so that all of our creativity can go into staying #HealthyTogether. Together we can do the following:

Personal Safety and Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

- Follow public health and governmental guidelines to stay in our homes except for essential work and to obtain supplies.

- Wear a mask and gloves when interacting with people not in our households.
- Maintain a safe distance of 6 feet of separation.
- Self-isolate if you are sick. Call a doctor if you have a high fever and seek treatment if you have difficulty breathing. Do not wait too long to seek treatment.
- Share critical information with a contact tracer.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes/nose/mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your elbow when sneezing or coughing.

Speak Out

- Become more civically engaged and communicate your #HealthyTogether and #SafeReopen concerns with our local, state, and federal elected officials.
- Stand in solidarity with communities of color impacted by racism, xenophobia, and COVID-19 grief and loss. Educate yourself on privilege as it relates to health inequities and what you can do to support everyone staying healthy and protected from the virus. Work with nonprofit partners, churches and neighbors to help their families who are affected.
- Support federal and state policies that mitigate economic impacts of the crisis, including unemployment, aid for businesses and nonprofits, aid for unemployed people and contract workers, and funding for critical programs in health, mental health, disabilities, domestic violence, foster youth.
- Support federal and state policy to invest in our infrastructure and communities including universal access to healthcare and broadband, and investments in public transit, schools, libraries, community centers, living wages.

Make a Difference

- Give to charity and to nonprofits you normally support in the arts, environment, and other areas impacted by physical distancing policies.
- Make a point of supporting African American/Black, Asian American, Latinx and immigrant-owned & led nonprofits, businesses and contractors, who have been subject to disinvestment, racism and xenophobia.
- Support family and friends who are out of work.
- Volunteer with a nonprofit.
- Continue your memberships in various local businesses and nonprofits that you support.
- If you have a yard or farm to care for, do it in environmentally sustainable ways.
- When you can't find the sunshine, **BE the sunshine!**
- Smile with your eyes while your mouth is behind a mask, and be thankful and kind to all those you encounter, especially front line workers.
- Be creative!

Employers:

- Provide paid sick leave and vacation time to your employees, and provide flexibility for employees working from home who have children and who are caregivers.
- If you have more than 90 days in reserve funds, use reserves to delay layoffs as long as you can.
- Provide adequate personal protective equipment to your employees.
- Provide reimbursement for home office expenses such as phone, internet and supplies.

Make a poster and post your picture or video on social media in support of the infinity plan for #HealthyTogether.

- Positive messages only, please.
- Nonprofits – Create branded sheets people can print at home for your organization.
“#HealthyTogether with Maryland Nonprofits” or “I Heart ABC Charity”
- Teachers and professors working with students online – encourage them to make posters and take pictures, make videos or memes for posting on social media (with age-appropriate parental permission)

Ideas to infinity!

Updated 4/24/2020