Dear Members,

We’re now two days into the start of Ohio’s “Stay at Home” order. Today the State has updated the current count of confirmed cases to 704 from 55 different counties. The Director of Health said that they are working to start updating their case count more frequently and expects to announce more about that soon.

They also reported that there has been a huge surge in calls to the ODH hotline from business owners & employees with questions regarding “essential businesses”. Let me reiterate a few things about that on this email – and provide some important new resources:

**Regarding the Stay at Home Order**
I continue to have business owners contacting me about how they can determine if they are considered an “essential business.” Again, I watched the Governor’s press conference today and they continue to refer to the language in the document outlining what is considered essential. I’m linking to this again [here](#) (please also see the FAQs).

I’ve also been asked if you must register somewhere to be considered essential. Today the Lieutenant Governor reiterated - **you do not need to do that.** BUT – the Lt. Governor said that you should have a rationale about how the order and the exclusions for ‘essential business’ applies to you if you are questioned by anyone during this time. Neither the local health department nor local law enforcement can interpret the Director’s order (they can enforce it). The State is expecting every business to make their own interpretation, in light of what the spirit of the order is. They did note, however, they are starting enforcement against one business who has been found in violation so please proceed thoughtfully on this.

If you are essential, then you are **required** to provide a safe working environment for your employees as outlined in item #15 in the Director’s Order. Please ensure you are following those rules. They also mentioned that these “safe work environment” standards in the Order are likely to be around for a while even after businesses start to reopen, so even if your business has closed for now, it’s best to familiarize yourself with this.

Additionally, each business owner should review item #18 in the Director’s Order – COVID-19 Information & Checklist for Businesses/Employers.

**BOTTOM LINE** – the goal of the order is to flatten the curve and lower the surge our hospitals and front-line care workers will see in the coming weeks. Please do everything you can to help protect them.

**SBA Loans Webinar**
Small businesses & non-profits have the ability to apply for an economic injury disaster loan through the Small Business Administration. [Here is an overview webinar](#) (about 25 minutes long) that can give you some more details on that program. Thanks to Bob Cohen at Braintree for sharing this with us!

**Families First Coronavirus Response Act**
We have received a lot of questions about this recent piece of legislation from Congress. We’re trying to gather good resources for you to glean from during this time. Here are a few things we have found:

- [Department of Labor Coronavirus Resource Page](#)
- A [general announcement from DOL regarding the FFCRA](#) & it’s coverage
- **FAQ’s from the DOL regarding FFCRA** – note the start date listed here as 4/1/20
- The Ohio Roofing Contractors Association has [shared a recent webinar] they did on COVID-19 and response to it. You have to register to see it by giving your email, [slides are here](#). (please note the 30-minute consulting offer was only for ORCA members, not our Chamber but they generously allowed us to share it – thanks to Kristine at Alumni Roofing for the connection). Additionally, they provide one other update:
  - The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has stated that the new Emergency Paid Sick Leave and Expanded FMLA Leave will become effective April 1, 2020, not on April 2 as originally anticipated. In addition, the DOL has adopted a non-enforcement period from March 18 through April 17. During this time period, the DOL has indicated it will not take enforcement action against an employer if the employer makes reasonable good-faith efforts to comply with the new paid leave provisions as determined by the DOL. Therefore, although eligible employees still must be granted leave beginning April 1, the DOL will not be pursuing violations until after April 17 for employers who are trying to comply with the law.
- If you still have questions on this, please keep asking them and we will try to track down answers!

**Taking Employees Temperatures**
Again – we are not attorneys, but rather passing along best practices of what we are hearing. It has been said that employee’s temperature information must be kept confidential, they should not be seeing each other’s or be logged together. Each employee should have their own log sheet and be kept confidential. (more in that webinar above).

**Resources for Coping with COVID-19**
We can all agree that what we are going through collectively is heavy. I am not ashamed to share that I have felt just about every possible emotion under the sun over the past two weeks. Many people are having a hard time coping with this massive change. [This page from ODH has a great summary](#) of the many resources that are available to help adults through this crisis. Please share this with your employees and encourage them to seek help if needed.

**Companies are Hiring**
Perhaps you have had to downsize during this time, or you know people who have been affected. There are many local companies who are hiring during this time. We’ve been trying to spotlight them on the [Chamber’s Facebook page](#) over the last couple days. Please share these so we can help people who are looking for work find a place to land during this uncertain time. If we have missed you and you are hiring, drop Clint Knight a line to let him know more.

**A Plea for PPE**
At this point, most medical facilities and the Emergency Management Director are all looking for donations of Personal Protective Equipment to help them handle the surge. If you have surplus supplies, PLEASE consider donating this to the cause. You can contact EMA at 419-774-5686, email [OhioHealth](#), or email Avita Health System to make donations. [Here is an announcement](#) from OhioHealth describing more. I’m sure there are other medical facilities accepting them as well (contact me if so).

**Pandemic Childcare**
In case you missed it, [here is the list of approved](#) Pandemic childcare providers. For more information about who is eligible for this childcare, and other questions, please [visit the ODJFS site here](#).

**Chamber Resources**
All of our past emails on COVID-19 as well as other resources are available on our website here.

Also, don’t forget the list of food places offering take-out, delivery, and curbside service (countywide) during this time thanks to our partners at Destination Mansfield & Downtown Mansfield. We’re doing our best to keep it up!

Final Thoughts
Returning as I so often have lately to The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King (this is from the movie):

Pippin: It’s so quiet.
Gandalf: It’s the deep breath before the plunge.
Pippin: I don’t want to be in a battle. But waiting on the edge of one I can’t escape is even worse.
Is there any hope, Gandalf?

After the many, many days of changes that have happened, the last day or two have been busy (no doubt!) but without the massive shifts that we had been seeing prior to that. The Stay at Home Order arrived, people are making their decisions on how to proceed and now we wait.

Is there hope? YES! There is hope in humanity working together to defeat this common enemy – the coronavirus. The last days and weeks have been hard for everyone. But let me tell you what I have seen. I’ve seen business owners going above and beyond to care for employees they consider family. I’ve seen employees volunteering to sacrifice to help the company survive a shut down. I’ve seen community members step forward and donate equipment to help our first responders. I’ve seen other community members step forward to help feed children who may not otherwise have a meal because school is not in session. I’ve seen first responders respond to the call bravely, day in and day out. I’ve seen people sacrifice their own livelihood because they felt compelled to protect people they will never see or meet.

There is hope. We will see the end of this. Not as soon as we all would like, but we have to know that each day when we choose to do what is best for others, we are a part of something larger than ourselves. That’s sort of ironic considering that we have to be kept so physically apart from each other right now.

There is hope, Richland County. We will defeat this enemy, together. We will help protect our friends, family, neighbors, and many we will never see or meet. We will do this together because we are #RichlandCountySTRONG!

Onward!

Jodie

Jodie A. Perry, CCE, IOM, CCEO-AP
President & CEO
Richland Area Chamber & Economic Development