Dear Members,

I hope this note finds you well. It’s hard to believe that this is my 24th update to you since first writing back on March 12th. Read on for more updates:

Columbus Updates
I’ll start with what was announced at today’s daily press conference – big State budget cuts. As businesses you’ve been looking at your own income decline, and the State is in a similar boat. The Governor announced $775 Million to be cut in the current budget, and that talks were beginning with the State Legislature on next year.

Also, the Governor announced that they expect to be able to announce reopening dates for restaurants, barbers/salons/personal services, and daycare on Thursday. There is no planned press conference tomorrow. I’ll keep you updated as we hear more.

PPP & EIDL Updates
As you know, the second round of funding for the Paycheck Protection Program opened a little over a week ago, and despite all that we expected, so far it still has money available to lend. That doesn’t necessarily mean the demand has lessened, but we are seeing the size of the loans be much less. The SBA provided a glimpse into how Round 2 is going in this update (thanks to Tim Ross at Congressman Gibb’s office for sharing). As of May 1st, nearly 59,000 Ohio companies had received funding just shy of a total of $5 Billion – and this is just round 2.

If you plan to apply, you should not delay because the money will expire soon and there is no guarantee of replenishment. This link has good detail from the Treasury on the program, here is their 4-page overview, and don’t forget the overview from the US Chamber to help you prepare. Note that Treasury has been updating their FAQ document – there are several important updates in there for agriculture, hospitals, and others. I also draw your attention to question #40 where they address what happens to your forgiveness potential if you call back an employee who declines to return. I’ll keep an eye out for further guidance on that. Remember, you apply for PPP through your local bank.

And, while the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program received additional funding, they have not reopened applications for this – except for agriculture businesses who are now eligible – click here for more. That being said, if you had previously applied and are waiting on the status of your application, or your advance grant, keep checking. I’ve talked to several people this week that just received money. Check your bank account because I’m hearing it’s just being deposited without an email update.

Preparing for Reopening
While we have had a lot of conversation around masks, it’s important to note that there are additional expectations that businesses are being asked when they get ready to reopen. Again, here are the general protocols for all businesses, and here are the specific sectors: manufacturing/distribution/construction; retail/consumer/service; general office environment.

When it comes to calculating your maximum occupancy, the City of Mansfield Building Department created this overview that can help you. And you are also welcome to call them for questions. Additionally, I know that the County Building Department is also working on something and I will share when I receive it.
For those who had buildings that were nearly completely shut down, the Ohio EPA offers this guidance to you for flushing your lines to get rid of any bacteria that might have built up from non-usage.

We want thank Richland Public Health Commissioner Sarah Humphrey, and City of Shelby Environmental Health Director Beth Conrad for joining our Small Business call today to talk about preparing your business for reopening. We had a good conversation, you can view that here if you missed it.

Also, today I had a conversation with Joe Jakubick, External Affairs with First Energy here locally. As you’ll recall they suspended their termination of services back in mid-March. He reports that they are seeing an increase in questions about when that will resume, with some businesses and individuals falling behind on their bills for the first time. They will not resume any terminations before July 1st. This is being communicated to reassure you if you or those you know are in that situation that you are not facing any immediate termination. You can read his whole email update to me here.

OhioHealth launched this “Back to Business” toolkit that has some great resources for both you as an employer and your employees. Also, President Vinson Yates provides this new update on what they are doing at the hospital in this reopening phase.

Don’t forget our list of local businesses who can help you source the protective equipment you may need for reopening (updated 5.4.20).

Unemployment Updates
You may have heard that over the weekend, ODJFS launched a portal on their website where employers can report when an employee refuses work. Here is their announcement about that topic. Additionally, in there they mention they will be issuing their full policy on that subject next week.

Are employers having a hard time getting employees back? In some cases, yes. Again, as with so much in this situation, I think clear, concise, and consistent communication with your employees will only help you navigate this reopening time. We also know that daycare not being open yet is presenting a challenge for getting some employees back. We hope that the Governor’s announcement about that reopening date later this week will help us all to get a more accurate picture of when that can help. We’ll continue to keep you updated.

Mental Health Awareness
Our friends at the Richland County Mental Health & Recovery Services Board have reached out to remind us that May is “Mental Health Awareness Month.” Check out this page full of ideas and resources that you can tap.

I hope that as an employer, you might consider sharing this great one-page overview with your employees that shows the many resources available to help right now. There remains a lot of stigma attached to mental health, which is unfortunate, because there are many, many resources available to support people. We’re all feeling the strain of the crisis at this point in a variety of ways. Don’t be afraid to reach out. Many providers are shifting to tele-health appointments. I’ve shared in the past that I see a counselor, and just did a virtual appointment last week...it really can make a difference!

#InThisTogetherOhio
Today was a special #GivingTuesday around the world to encourage support for non-profits, and the Richland County Foundation hosted another edition of “Richland Gives” to aid our local non-profits. It’s not too late to give! We have a strong non-profit community here in Richland County, and we thank the Richland County Foundation for their leadership and support of this program during this time.

Have a suggestion for a future spotlight here? Drop me a line!

**Final Thoughts**
You are not alone.

I repeat. You are not alone.

Everyone one of us is facing this crisis from a different perspective. It’s complex, multi-faceted, and it feels sort of relentless. Maybe you think you are the only one who is dealing with whatever it is keeping you up at night. But I assure you, you are not the only one.

I’ve had a full range of emotions from wanting to walk away from everything, to feeling like I was in the exact right spot...sometimes all within an hour. It’s exhausting. We – as humans, as employers, as employees - are being asked to make decisions we did not expect to have to make. It is very hard. But we are resilient creatures, and we can be astonishingly adaptable to new challenges.

I’ve been pretty transparent with you in these emails about how I’m handling things, and what I am seeing. I won’t lie, it’s a little scary and every time I hit send I hold my breath and hope that it reaches you in the spirit it is intended – to help you know that you’re not alone.

The Chamber is here for your business, and for you. And so am I. My heart is fully confident of our bright future together.

We are emerging.
We are rebuilding.
You are not alone.

Onward!
Jodie

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

PS – We have been widening our email list. If this is the first email you’ve received – Welcome! [Here is a link to our past emails](#) and other great resources to help your business!