



March 22, 2020

The Honorable Henry McMaster
State House
1100 Gervais Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

RE: Shelter in Place and Essential Services

Dear Governor McMaster,

On behalf of South Carolina’s business community, the S.C. Chamber of Commerce appreciates your tireless efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and to support families and businesses in our state. The business community is strong and resilient, but we are facing a crisis like nothing we’ve seen before. As such, we ask you to work with the business community as you carefully balance the interests of businesses in our state and public health, and as you contemplate further actions affecting businesses.

Yesterday, you stated that ordering South Carolinians to shelter in place is not under consideration at this time, and that “it will be much less likely, as long as South Carolinians follow official instructions and take recommended precautions now.” South Carolina’s businesses and industries are working hard to be responsible and follow your guidance and, therefore, urge you to continue to be measured as you consider further restrictions.

Since your March 13th Declaration of Emergency, business and industry began taking immediate steps to protect their employees and the public by teleworking when possible, practicing social distancing, following quarantine protocols, using virtual communications instead of public gatherings and exceeding best practices for dozens of industries. The S.C. Chamber and other business associations are communicating with our members constantly to provide state and federal government resources to educate businesses on how to keep workplaces safe using the latest CDC and DHEC Guidelines for Business and Employers and OSHA’s Guide on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19.

We understand that a shelter in place order is not “off the table” and that you will need to both prepare for this contingency, as many other states and local governments are doing, and find the right balance so that essential workers can continue to support public health and safety of our citizens, as well as the economic well-being of our state.

To that end, we urge you to consider these guidelines and recommendations in developing an essential workers plan: (1) include critical infrastructure workers—as identified in the DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency’s (CISA) Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce: Ensuring Community and National Resilience in COVID-19 Response (*expressly state CISA guidance in an order*) and (2) proactively allow businesses to apply for an exemption and create a special hotline and email address before issuing an order (NC model); and (3) adjust the essential workers list to adapt to changing conditions.

The business community appreciates your attention to this concern and your ongoing leadership. Please let me know if we can be of assistance during these unprecedented and trying times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ted Pitts". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end.

Ted Pitts
President and CEO
South Carolina Chamber of Commerce