



May 26, 2020

Governor Tom Wolf  
225 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dr. Rachel Levine, Secretary  
PA Department of Health  
Health & Welfare Building, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf and Secretary Levine:

We write to ask you to move Mercer County to the Green phase on May 29, 2020, or as soon thereafter as possible. As you know, 17 counties in northwestern Pennsylvania will move to the Green phase on May 29th, including Lawrence, Venango and Crawford Counties, which border Mercer County, but Mercer County was excluded from that list. Additionally, the bordering State of Ohio moved to the equivalent of the Green phase on May 21st.

While we understand that a concentration of COVID-19 cases in the City of Farrell, Mercer County spurred the decision to exclude Mercer County from the Green phase announcement, we also understand that the flare-up was contained to the residents of a group-home-type facility in the city. We do not believe that Mercer County should be held back from the Green phase at this time, due to an isolated and contained flare-up affecting 18 individuals.

Additionally, the Plan for Pennsylvania specifies that among the criteria used to determine movement between phases is the diagnosis of fewer than 50 new confirmed cases per 100,000 in population in a county or region over the previous 14 days. Mercer County moved to the Yellow phase on May 8th with a positive case count of 70. The positive case count on May 22nd stood at 102, or an increase of 32 positive cases. As Mercer County has a population of about 112,000, it could have added up to 56 new positive cases in order to fit the criteria. As of the date of this letter, only 3 additional positive cases have been added in Mercer County since May 22<sup>nd</sup>. It is clear that our social distancing efforts have worked, and we have successfully flattened the curve.

Further, as businesses in bordering counties will be permitted to resume fitness services, hair styling and nail services, and more complete restaurant services, while following CDC guidelines, effective May 29th, and with businesses in bordering Ohio already offering these services, keeping Mercer County in the Yellow phase will not accomplish the desired goals. Instead, many Mercer County residents are likely to travel to bordering counties and Ohio, to receive these services, as they already did when Ohio reopened.

The effects of a more prolonged closure in Mercer County will not translate into public health benefits, but will only hurt small businesses in our rural county even more. With each passing day, mom-and-pop businesses are struggling to stay afloat, lacking income and moving ever closer to closing their doors permanently.

We realize that these reopening decisions are made only after careful consideration; however, we believe it is necessary to share our views based upon the circumstances, the declining number of cases in Mercer County, and the practicality of carving out only Mercer County in a region of Green. We hope that you will consider our views and move Mercer County to the Green phase, along with the other 17 northwestern Pennsylvania counties on May 29, 2020.

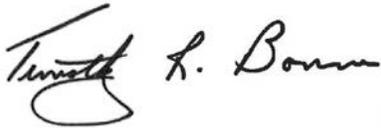
Sincerely,



Michele Brooks  
Senator  
50<sup>th</sup> District



Mark Longietti  
State Representative  
7<sup>th</sup> District



Timothy R. Bonner  
State Representative  
8<sup>th</sup> District



Matthew M. McConnell  
Mercer County Commissioner



Timothy M. McGonigle  
Mercer County Commissioner



Scott Boyd  
Mercer County Commissioner