



## OFFICE OF COUNTY MAYOR GLENN JACOBS

400 Main Street, Suite 615, Knoxville, TN 37902

May 18, 2020

Knoxville-Knox County Reopening Task Force  
c/o Knox County Health Department  
140 Dameron Avenue  
Knoxville, TN 37917

**RE: Governor Bill Lee's Loosened Restrictions and Updated Guidelines**

Dear Joint Task Force members,

As you know, last week Governor Lee announced the State will issue new guidance, effective May 22, for large attractions such as theaters, theme parks and museums, and will further ease restrictions on restaurants and retail. I strongly urge you to follow the State's lead moving forward and support issuing similar guidance for Knox County—beginning Friday.

The purpose of COVID-19 mitigation efforts was to prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed by the pandemic. Thanks to the efforts of our community and our health care professionals, we have kept that from happening. Knox County has done what's been asked of it.

I understand the desire to exercise extreme caution before making changes, but available information indicates it is safe to further loosen restrictions just as Governor Lee and the State Health Department are doing in 89 other Tennessee counties. Knox County is reporting some of the lowest pandemic numbers in the State and there is no certainty that staying closed—as other counties in our region open—will offer any protection from community spread.

As the virus runs its natural course, we must absolutely remain cautious, but also realize that nothing we do is going to stomp it out completely. The danger now is that we are unjustifiably delaying the process of healing our economy, which is itself a danger to public health. A sick economy will undoubtedly also produce sick people. Too many of our neighbors remain without work and too many businesses continue to struggle to keep their doors open, even after implementing alternative business models.

Delay in easing these restrictions puts Knox County businesses at a competitive disadvantage to those in neighboring counties—harming not only the businesses themselves, but also the people they employ. How can we say our shut down is to protect the health of our residents when we can't restrict their freedom to cross county lines and/or patronize businesses not subject to the restrictions we have placed on our own?

When we look at Knox County's number of active cases, hospitalizations and fatalities, they indicate no good reason to continue enforcing this shutdown. Toward this end, I believe the Health Department's Reopening Task Force should follow Governor Lee's lead rather than waiting another week.

Sincerely,

Glenn Jacobs  
Knox County Mayor

cc: Files