



June 1, 2020

Office of Governor Tim Walz
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Suite 130
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Request for prompt and safe re-opening of customer-facing businesses

Dear Governor Walz:

On behalf of the City of Hastings, thank you for all you have done to protect the health and wellbeing of our residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We respectfully request that restaurants and other customer-facing businesses be allowed to re-open as soon as possible. The City of Hastings has been a leader in working with our local businesses to ensure social distancing measures are at the forefront of business operations. As part of our local HEART Grant business assistance program, \$180,000 in funding was targeted towards the establishment of social distancing measures for over 60 individual businesses. We were impressed by the innovation and care brought forward by our business community to safely reopen businesses. In a May 20th article, the St. Paul Pioneer Press recognized the City's ability to provide innovative solutions to balance the needs of social distancing and commerce through the expansion of outdoor dining areas into City streets.

Hastings is a community that understands the importance of staying home and adhering to social distancing guidance. During this time, our residents are doing so while also supporting local restaurants and businesses by making purchases online and curbside and ordering food to-go. Despite these efforts, our small businesses are suffering greatly, and many customer-facing businesses are operating at an unsustainable level with only a fraction of typical revenue.

Small Businesses are foundational to Hastings' local economy. Data from Chamber of Commerce membership indicates that of 209 members with at least 1 full-time employee, 167 have 10 or fewer employees, and only 25 have more than 20 employees. The owners of these businesses are our neighbors. Their personal and financial investment in our community is significant, and the difficulty they are enduring is felt by all of us in our community as if extended family members.

Businesses have their pandemic preparedness plans in place, following guidelines set out by the CDC, MNOSHA, MNDOL, and MNDEED. By taking these steps, we believe our businesses can open and operate in a safe and controlled manner. It is critical for our business owners and the economic vitality of our community.

The City's efforts in providing local business assistance is not enough; we fear that continued restrictions on commerce will lead to the closing of more small businesses that define the character and uniqueness of Hastings. We ask that you put trust in local entrepreneurs to do what they do best...provide innovative solutions to ensure the safe operation of commerce.

Sincerely,

Mary Fasbender
Mayor
City of Hastings

Joe Balsanek
Councilmember
City of Hastings

Lori Braucks
Councilmember
City of Hastings

Tina Folch
Councilmember
City of Hastings

Lisa Leifeld
Councilmember
City of Hastings

Trevor Lund
Councilmember
City of Hastings

Mark Vaughan
Councilmember
City of Hastings

Cc: Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce
Hastings Downtown Business Association