

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 7, 2020

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Governor of Louisiana
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards:

We are writing to urge you to safely reopen Louisiana's economy as soon as possible consistent with federal guidance.

Louisiana is accustomed to disaster management and resiliency, but the coronavirus has had a profound impact on Louisiana's citizens and economy unlike anything we have ever experienced. Millions of Louisianans have been subject to stay home orders, schools have been closed, businesses shuttered and over two thousand of our fellow citizens have lost their lives. Our hospitality, energy, seafood, agricultural, small businesses and other sectors have been especially impacted.

Similarly, the federal response has been unlike any our nation has ever seen. We have enacted four federal relief packages that have provided billions of dollars in assistance to the State of Louisiana, assistance to small businesses and economic relief directly to our citizens.

These investments are designed to address the acute needs of our state and citizens. It is financially impossible and inappropriate to continue making unemployment payments, economic relief checks, forgivable loans, and multi-billion dollar grants to states when every dollar we spend amounts to four or five dollars we are asking our children and grandchildren to repay, despite better alternatives to this approach.

The incredible efforts of our healthcare workers and first responders on the front lines and the efforts of Louisiana citizens have resulted in the "flattening of the curve" of coronavirus cases we all desire. Consistent with the pattern occurring among the fifty states across the country, this flattening is not occurring uniformly in Louisiana. Some cities, towns and parishes have demonstrated much lower coronavirus case rates than others.

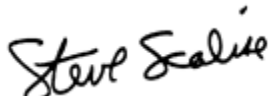
The federal Opening Up America Again guidance anticipates this and is designed to be applied regionally - and applying it regionally will not affect recovery spending. Just like Montana may phase-in sooner than New York, low-incident parishes may be ready to phase-in sooner than parishes with "hot spots", based upon the judgement of parish and local officials who know best the needs of their communities.

As President Donald Trump stated in reference to Louisiana on April 30, "I hope they don't wait to open up the whole state at one time. They can open up large sections." We wholeheartedly agree.

The safety, viability and health of our citizens is paramount, and keeping the entire state shut down causes adverse consequences as well. Hundreds of thousands of working Louisianans have lost their jobs, multi-generational businesses are on the brink of bankruptcy, and whole sectors of our state's economy are suffering irreplaceable losses. If more people are ultimately subjected to poverty because of this situation, a significant decline in public health outcomes will follow.

We can protect lives and livelihoods at the same time, and we must. Other states around the country have safely applied the same federal guidance to their statewide and local phase-in and are beginning to give their working families and small businesses a fighting chance to survive and thrive. The citizens of Louisiana deserve no less. We urge you to allow our parish and local officials to phase-in their communities based on the same CDC guidelines and White House Guidelines for Opening Up America Again.

Sincerely,



Steve Scalise
Member of Congress



Garret Grayes
Member of Congress



Ralph Abraham, M.D.
Member of Congress



Clay Higgins
Member of Congress



Mike Johnson
Member of Congress