

NEWS RELEASE



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Mastriano: Senate OKs Measures to Create Better Process for COVID-19 Mitigation

HARRISBURG – The Senate approved two bills today that would provide much-needed clarity and common sense to the process of deciding which businesses can safely operate during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to [State Senator Doug Mastriano \(R-33\)](#)

Governor Wolf ordered the closure of all businesses not deemed “life-sustaining” on March 16 in response to concerns about the spread of the coronavirus. Although a haphazard waiver system was eventually created for businesses that wished to remain open, that process was riddled with inconsistencies and lacked any sense of transparency or accountability to the public.

The bills approved by the Senate today would create a better process for determining which businesses can continue to remain open, provide clarity on mitigation strategies necessary to protect the health and safety of both customers and employees, and give county leaders a stronger voice in which mitigation measures should be implemented locally.

“This is about doing the right thing – we need to hear the voice of our people and we need to be the voice of our people,” said Mastriano. “We can safely and smartly reopen key sectors of our state without compromising the integrity of our population.”

“Unfortunately, the Governor’s waiver system is flawed, ineffective, lacks accountability, has no oversight and is riddled with unconstitutional powers,” added Mastriano. “The one size fits all approach to choose which businesses can and cannot stay open defies reason and logic. We must fix this broken system before many of these jobs disappear for good.”

[Senate Bill 613](#) would require the Governor to create clear guidelines for businesses to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses that are able to operate safely under the new guidelines would be permitted to re-open as long as they comply with mitigation strategies.

The bill would require COVID-19 mitigation plans to be developed by the Wolf Administration based on guidelines issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). Twenty-two states and the District of Columbia follow CISA guidelines.

“It is indeed time for action, not for dithering and inaction,” said Mastriano. “Senate Bill 613 will not threaten anyone’s life – it is a safe and proven way to get back to work without increasing the spread of the virus.”

To restore local control, [Senate Bill 327](#) would give county governments the option to develop and implement their own plans to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, following CISA guidelines. Under the bill, businesses already identified as essential could continue to operate. However, counties would also be given the authority to develop plans to allow other industries to operate if it is safe to do so.

The bill also creates a COVID-19 Cost and Recovery Task Force made up of representatives of all three branches of government to identify and address issues related to the COVID-19 public health emergency together. The panel would be responsible for developing a recovery plan to restore public services and economic activity when it is safe to do so.

Mastriano recently introduced [Senate Bill 1103](#), the “PA Healthy Citizens & Healthy Businesses Back to Work Initiative,” which is assigned to the Senate Health Committee. Language from Mastriano’s bill, such as the Center for Disease Control guidelines, was inserted into the measures approved Wednesday.

“Everyone is frustrated with the current process,” said Mastriano. “With today’s legislation, recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and the Department of Homeland Security are being taken into account, so that we can methodically and safely reopen Pennsylvania for business.”

Instead of working with Pennsylvania business owners and lawmakers to develop a recovery plan for the state’s economy, Governor Wolf recently joined other northeastern governors in an agreement to open selected industries on a shared schedule. The plan would essentially give unelected bureaucrats in other states more power over Pennsylvania businesses than state lawmakers and local elected leaders.

“The existing system is completely broken and Governor Wolf has offered no indication about how he plans to fix it, or if he’s capable of doing so,” said Mastriano. “Adopting the Center for Disease Control standards will put health experts in charge, not bureaucrats from the Governor’s administration.”

<http://av.pasenategop.com/mastriano/2020/0420/sb613.mp3>

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