

April 28, 2020

Dear Governor Pritzker,

During this unprecedented challenge to our state, you stressed multiple times your willingness and eagerness to work with legislators from both sides of the aisle and from every part of the state. As the women of the House Republican Caucus, we stand ready to offer solutions and work with you to implement a safe and reasonable regional plan to open Illinois. We are business owners, scientists, mayors, lawyers, community organizers, volunteers, officers, mothers, sisters, grandmothers, caregivers, and legislators. We represent 880,000 Illinoisans across all regions of the state—from the Chicago suburbs to regions in northern, western, eastern, southern, and central Illinois.

Our family members and constituents are fighting on the front lines as healthcare workers. We know and love people who are diagnosed with and suffering from COVID-19. We know, love, and represent people who lost their jobs, closed their small businesses, and exhausted their savings. For us, this is not political. This is personal.

We asked many questions concerning IDPH modeling, PPE procurement process and inventory, IDOC policies for transfers and releases, issues at IDES, safeguarding Long Term Care Facilities, and protecting state facilities for veterans and the developmentally disabled. We made many suggestions to promote physical and mental wellbeing, including opening state parks, locking down our prisons, housing our homeless, and protecting our most vulnerable populations. You did respond to our request for IDNR to open our state parks, thank you.

Unfortunately, a majority of our questions and suggestions are not acknowledged. We reached out to you, but you have not contacted one Republican woman legislator to discuss our concerns, suggestions, or solutions. We are writing to tell you as a matter of record the House Republican Women are here for Illinois. We are ready to offer suggestions, strategies, and solutions; and we are calling for the legislature to reconvene. We want to do our job as essential employees for our state and want to work with you to safely and regionally reopen our state.

SAFELY

- As elected officials, we have a responsibility to all Illinois citizens. Our number one priority as we reopen Illinois is to protect those who are vulnerable to this virus and ensure they have the appropriate support and necessary resources.
 - Maintain safe social distancing guidelines where necessary.
 - Provide safe guidelines for reopening, while loosening restrictions regionally.

REASONABLY

- Illinois needs a reasoned and common-sense plan to reopen our state region by region understanding the virus affects each region differently. Some of these common sense steps include:
 - Allow patients access to critical healthcare such as mammograms, joint replacements and cancer screenings while also protecting our healthcare infrastructure and capacity.

- Allow small retail shop selling products sold at Walmart and other big box stores to reopen following the same social distancing guidelines.
- Allow privately and municipally owned campgrounds to open and rent cabins if large hotel chains can rent out rooms.
- Allow fishing and boating of up to 10 if they meet social distance guidelines.

RESPONSIBLY

- Our constituents deserve a responsible government—a government where there are effective checks and balances and a government where all voices are heard. A responsible government means calling the legislature back to session.
 - Executive orders affecting state agencies and policies must also be addressed by the legislature—other states legislatures are working.
 - Ensure the state and federal constitutions are upheld.
 - If we ask citizens to trust government in this crisis, we must restore citizens' freedom to act responsibly and to support their families.
 - There will never be 100% compliance with any strategy, however strict. The state must not continue to unreasonably restrict the freedom and livelihood of all residents to attempt to prevent bad actors who are not now and will never follow social distancing requirements.

REGIONALLY

- One size does not fit all. We must safely open our state on a regional basis. Other states including New York, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Iowa proposed measured, regional reopening strategies.
 - Safely open our state at appropriate times for each region.
 - Our state is diverse and understanding and accepting this diversity allows us to reopen incrementally, regionally, and safely.
 - Empower local governments to reopen based on benchmarks and criteria set by the CDC, IDPH with input from community and economic leaders.
 - Share the data pursuant to legislator requests and collaborate with the legislature to apply the science, modeling, and experts to build a regional reopening plan.
 - This virus does not respect boundaries, but it also impacts regions of the state in different ways.

We, the women of the House Republican Caucus, ask you to work with us. We are prepared to work on a serious plan to reopen Illinois safely, reasonably, responsibly, and regionally. We request you meet with us collectively as a group to share our ideas and offer solutions. We must continue to protect our vulnerable populations and safeguard our healthcare delivery systems, while we must also save our economy and our families. We are prepared to assist in developing and implementing a plan to safely get Illinois back to business reasonably, regionally, and responsibly.

Finally, as members of a co-equal branch of government, we request you call a special legislative session to start work on reopening Illinois safely and regionally.

We are ready and await a meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Rep. Avery Bourne

Rep. Terri Bryant

Rep. Amy L. Grant

Rep. Norine K. Hammond

Rep. Deanne M Mazzochi

Rep. Tony M. McCombie

Rep. Margo McDermed

Rep. Lindsay Parkhurst