



OUR OPEN LETTER

Dear Governor Kemp,

We, the members of the Black Caucus of the Young Democrats of Georgia, are extremely disappointed by your decision to rescind part of the “Shelter-in-Place” Order to allow for the re-opening of non-essential businesses. Furthermore, we are greatly disappointed with your selection of establishments like barbershops, hair, and nail salons to open, which are usually staffed by working-class African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic and Latino-American owners or workers. It is impossible for service workers to perform their work duties without social distancing -- a necessity to fight and halt the progress of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

We view this as an attack on working Georgians, especially Georgians of color. There are 501 deaths in Georgia as of April 13. The DPH reports at least 248 are Black or African American. We view this action as an insult to the dead, suffering, and distressed people of Southwest Georgia, particularly Black Georgians, who have weathered a severe manifestation of the outbreak. It is a travesty that multiple counties in Southwest Georgia have been listed in the top 20 counties in the nation with the most deaths per capita, with Dougherty County, in particular, having been among the top five worst-hit counties in the nation for several weeks.

We also view this action as a political ploy for your Republican majority in the General Assembly to avoid repealing Article VII, Section 3, Paragraph IV of the Georgia State Constitution to raise the income tax above 6 percent, which is needed to sustain unemployment payments in the coming months and help Georgians recoup the monetary losses from the death and destruction of the COVID-19 outbreak.

We have seen the lengths that the Republicans have gone to avoid responsibility and to take ownership of the lack of accurate and timely information disseminated around the state. We are disappointed by your refusal to advocate for the tools and resources that could have preemptively reduced the spread of the virus. Such a stance directly increased the death rates among Black and brown Georgians.

Furthermore, your reluctance to order an earlier “Shelter in Place” left confusion among local governments. It was their leadership that flattened the curve in certain areas around the state. Even after local governments enacted ordinances, your eventual “Shelter in Place” repealed their policies that had far more restrictions around protecting their residents. Conversely, Georgia has had one of the shortest “Shelter in Place” periods compared to other states.



**YOUNG
DEMOCRATS
OF GEORGIA**
Black Caucus

We are baffled by your action to open the state given the inadequate number of COVID-19 tests to safely allow workers to resume normal activities. Based on the numbers made public by the Georgia Department of Health, less than 1% of Georgia's population has been tested for COVID-19. Other states who have conducted more tests based on their population size remain closed. States that saw less death and consequent devastation from COVID-19 remained closed.

Valuing human life is a nonpartisan issue. As a result of your actions, more Georgians will die. Georgian whose lives could have been saved by meaningful, authentic, and equitable access to healthcare around the state.

We demand the following:

1. Accurate and timely data collection based on race and other demographic info for an equitable assessment of the virus' impact;
2. Restoration and extension of the full Shelter-in-Place order, with no exceptions for religious congregations and non-essential businesses until the CDC and other medical professionals agree with doing so;
3. The closing of Georgia's beaches;
4. A repealing of Article VII, Section 3, Paragraph IV of the Georgia State Constitution, by legislative referral;
5. Equitable implementation of all means to fund unemployment benefits for all Georgians in the interim;
6. A calling of the Republican legislative majority into a remote session to initiate the process to put a statute question on the ballot to amend the State Constitution to expand Medicaid under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) without any work requirements;
7. Hazardous pay to all essential workers, including grocery, retail, and shipping.

Sincerely,

The Black Caucus of the Young Democrats of Georgia