



129th Maine Senate
Troy D. Jackson
President of the Senate

May 5, 2020

Governor Janet T. Mills
1 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Governor Mills:

The past two months have brought unthinkable disruption to the lives of each and every one of us. We're grappling with the consequences of COVID-19 in our personal and professional lives, and as legislators, we also hear from innumerable Mainers about their own unique experiences trying to understand this virus, react appropriately, and stay optimistic about the future.

With these individuals' experiences in mind, I write to propose the creation of a COVID-19 response task force that will bring members of your cabinet, public health experts, business leaders, labor and employment interests, and the public together to find safe and sensible ways to open Maine's economy again.

This task force would bring together health, business and public interests to harness the creativity, innovation, and resolve Mainers have demonstrated in the face of this crisis. With the involvement of health care and hospital professionals, the task force would keep Mainers informed about the threat of the virus and our capacity to respond with hospital care, virus and antibody testing, contact tracing and pharmaceuticals and vaccines. Armed with this information, business, labor and employment interests would allow greater economic activity by establishing protocols for specific industries that impose flexible health precautions at a level proportionate to the threat. My caucus and I encourage involvement from a broad variety of affected industries - including the agriculture, fishing, hospitality and tourism industries among many others - local governments, K-12 and higher education, and nonprofits. As representatives of the people of the State of Maine and policymakers, we also recommend that at least four legislators from the Senate and four from the House of Representatives from both parties be involved.

Mainers across the state have expressed their belief that a reckless reopening could be harmful to our economy, but we also hear concern about a too-cautious plan that may not give due consideration to innovative ideas for emerging from this pandemic safely and prosperously. Who better to provide input on opening a new, resilient economy than those whose hard work and dedication to our state make it the place we are so proud to call home.

The task force we propose could begin meeting immediately, solicit public input, and provide regular updates on its work to the administration, the Legislature, and the public. In addition to a plan for safe business reopenings, we also believe this task force would be well-positioned to advise on the use of the \$1.25 billion and additional federal dollars received under the CARES Act and other federal legislation. The task force should also consider how we can best respond to a resurgence of COVID-19 or another public health threat in the future.

Yesterday, you announced the creation of an Economic Recovery Committee that will be tasked with studying the longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on our state's economy and making policy recommendations for how Maine can recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic. This is an incredibly important step, and I appreciate your invitation to include legislative appointments from the four legislative caucuses in that group.

In comparison, our proposal is focused on the issues that will arise in the immediate-term as Maine contemplates how we will balance protecting our public health and restarting the economy that supports the livelihoods of our citizens. I have included an attachment that outlines a proposed purpose and membership for the task force.

Your leadership has helped keep Maine among the states with the lowest prevalence of COVID-19; my colleagues and I look forward to working with you and all Mainers to take advantage of this position with a clear path toward a better future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Troy", written in a cursive style.

Sen. Troy Jackson
Senate President

Recommendations for an Executive COVID-19 Task Force

1. Purpose

- a. Bring legislative, public health, labor and business perspectives together
- b. Advise the administration on strategies to reopen the economy in phases based on health and safety metrics based on input from a variety of constituencies
- c. Make recommendations for the planning administration and oversight of federal relief funds the state receives from the CARES Act and other federal appropriations related to the COVID-19 pandemic
- d. Make recommendations to the Governor on short-term and long-term economic revitalization
- e. Recommend industry-specific guidance so that businesses can be prepared to operate safely and protect their employees and customers

2. Membership

- a. Heather Johnson, Commissioner of Economic and Community Development
- b. Laura Fortman, Commissioner of Labor
- c. Kirsten Figueroa, Commissioner of Administrative and Financial Services
- d. Jeanne Lambrew, Commissioner of Health and Human Services
- e. Four members of the Senate, recommended by the President of the Senate, including members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature;
- f. Four members of the House of Representatives, recommended by the Speaker of the House, including members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature
- g. A representative from a small business in the restaurant/hospitality industry
- h. A representative from an organization representing workers in the restaurant/hospitality industry
- i. A representative from a small business in the agricultural/farming/fishing industry
- j. A representative from a business with 1-10 employees
- k. A representative from a business with 11-50 employees
- l. A representative from a business with more than 51 employees
- m. A representative from an organized labor union
- n. A representative from construction or the building trades
- o. A representative from the natural resources sector
- p. Hospital/health care representation
- q. Maine Municipal Association or specific local government officials
- r. Nonprofit representation
- s. Public health advocacy representation

3. Meetings

- a. Relevant public access provision requires public meetings of “Any advisory organization, including any authority, board, commission, committee, council, task force or similar organization of an advisory nature, established, authorized or organized by law or resolve or by Executive Order issued by the Governor and not otherwise covered by this subsection, unless the law, resolve or Executive Order establishing, authorizing or organizing the advisory organization specifically exempts the organization from the application of this subchapter”