



April 16, 2020

Rep. Tina Liebling  
House Health and Human Services Finance Division  
Minnesota House of Representatives

Dear Chair Liebling,

On behalf of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, representing 6,300 businesses and more than 500,000 employees statewide, thank you for holding today's hearing about the status of efforts to increase COVID-19 testing in Minnesota.

Throughout the challenges presented by this public health emergency the Minnesota Chamber's goal has been to ***strike a balance between safeguarding health and protecting Minnesota's economy***. We are ready to work with the Legislature and Walz Administration to quickly move towards allowing more Minnesotans to return to work.

Business operations can and should return to a sustainable level without jeopardizing work or customer safety.

Businesses that have been deemed essential have developed detailed strategies to protect their workforce from the spread of COVID-19 while ensuring continuity of operations. This has proven effective. Examples of these practices include spacing out work stations and limiting gatherings in common areas and work vehicles; staggering shifts and limiting in-person interactions with coworkers and customers/clients; instituting additional deep cleaning measures for equipment, surfaces, and work spaces; providing hand sanitizer and gloves, masks, and other personal protective equipment; and establishing plans and protocols for use of temperature and other wellness checks to ensure that employees who have been exposed to COVID-19 or are showing symptoms remain at home and access the care and treatment they need.

Businesses that have been closed in the furtherance of social distancing goals have used this pause in operations to develop their own plans and procedures in expectation of safely and responsibly reopening their doors and restarting their operations in line with the requirements of this "new normal."

***Minnesota businesses are ready to open.*** Employers want to provide safe and healthy workplaces for their employees and customers. They are anxious to have access to testing that will help identify individuals that may be sick with the virus and those who may be immune. Acceleration of testing availability is critically important to restoring public confidence and re-opening our economy.

Minnesota has always been a healthcare leader. The resident companies and institutions of our Medical Alley have stepped up and led in the global response to this pandemic. Their work now positions us well to lead in putting our people and our businesses back to work. The state should seek every opportunity available, and make the investments necessary, to leverage the incredible work of our home grown institutions to build the testing capacity we need. The Mayo Clinic has made a tremendous commitment

to the state to provide thousands of serology and diagnostic tests on a daily basis, and we know that many other Minnesota companies are positioned to provide assistance as well.

The Minnesota Chamber supports financial support by the state to rapidly and comprehensively build critical testing capacity. Businesses around Minnesota are doing their part. Those that are operating are doing so safely. Those that are closed are ready to open and do the same. But, as noted above, the state must be ready to make the investments necessary to provide the public health infrastructure to support them and their employees.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views with you today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bentley Graves", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Bentley Graves  
Director, Health Care &  
Transportation Policy