

Minnesota House of Representatives

May 17, 2020
VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Office of Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison
445 Minnesota Street, Suite 1400
St Paul, MN 55101

Dear Attorney General Ellison,

As you may have heard, the rural Minnesota economy is on the verge of collapse due to numerous executive orders issued by Governor Walz. Most specifically, the governor's decisions regarding which businesses receive the vaunted "essential" label has forced many of what he believes are "non-essential" businesses to the brink of eternal closure.

Because of this, some of these "non-essential" business owners are making the decision to re-open prior to June 1, with a customer and employee safety plan in place, in order to survive.

It has come to our attention that the Attorney General's Office is contacting these businesses and threatening them with a fine, which could be up to \$25,000 per violation, if these business owners have the audacity to try and earn a living.

We would like to think the Attorney General's office has better things to do than to financially punish people who have gone without a paycheck for nearly two months. Because we have heard from our local business owners, we would like an answer to this question: is the Attorney General's office threatening "non-essential" business owners with fines if they re-open prior to June 1?

For two months, our Main Streets have been barren. The reality is, when a Main Street business in rural Minnesota shuts down, it never reopens. When they are forced into closure by their state government, the likelihood increases that their closure will be permanent. These are desperate times in rural Minnesota.

Keep in mind, a number of our rural counties have reported 10 COVID-19 cases or less since the pandemic began, yet they are being forced to operate under the same guidelines as Hennepin County with its more than 4,000 reported cases. Despite this, the business owners in our rural counties have put together re-opening plans that will protect the health of anyone who enters, even though no one has officially told them when they can re-open.

At a time when the federal government is trying desperately to help our businesses, it appears our Attorney General's office is threatening to keep them down. If true, that is certainly within your jurisdiction. And as state lawmakers, it is also within our jurisdiction to keep tabs on the fines you place on the rural business owners who are facing bankruptcy, and to remember that amount the next time we are setting a budget for the Attorney General's Office.

Respectfully,



Ron Kresha
State Representative



Rod Hamilton
State Representative



Joe Schomacker
State Representative



Minority Leader Kurt Daudt



Representative Paul Anderson



Deputy Minority Leader Anne Neu



Representative Dave Baker



Representative Jeff Backer



Representative Greg Davids



Representative Peggy Bennett



Representative Bob Dettmer



Representative Brian Daniels



Representative Dan Fabian



Representative Lisa Demuth



Representative Sondra Erickson



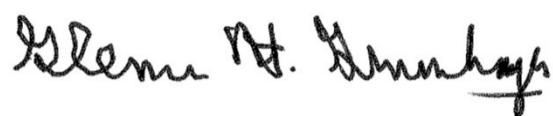
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Representative Steve Green



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Representative John Heinrich



Representative Brian Johnson



Representative Tony Jurgens



Representative Jon Koznick



Representative Dale Lueck



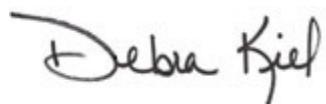
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Representative Jim Nash



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Representative Linda Runbeck



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Representative Nolan West