



April 22, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
1100 San Jacinto Blvd
Austin, Texas 78701

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RE: Recommendations for Gov. Abbott's Strike Force to Open Texas Businesses from Texas Hispanic Chambers of Commerce and their Leadership

Dear Gov. Abbott,

First of all, thank you for your steadfast leadership for all Texans during these unprecedented times in our country. We appreciate your ability to keep Texans calm, create stable certainty for our collective future, and maintain communications with entities who care about the future economic strength of our state.

There are approximately 1.8 million small businesses in Texas. For us, small business is big business and we need to do everything in our power to ensure that they are protected and empowered to get back on track contributing to our struggling economy.

On behalf of the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (USHCC), and Hispanic chambers of commerce in the State of Texas, we are writing to request and recommend the following considerations to begin the process of re-opening businesses in Texas. We have studied the situation with extreme caution. As we understand the unparalleled sensitivity required to proceed with your decisions to have a proactive role and lead our state forward.

The USHCC actively promotes the economic growth, development and interests of more than 4.5 million Hispanic-owned businesses that, combined, contribute over \$800 billion to the American economy every year. We also serve as a platform for our nation-wide network of over 250 local Hispanic chambers of commerce.

We understand that the Texas economy is devastated by the COVID-19 crisis. It is critical that we reopen Texas for business, put Texans back to work, and ensure the safety of all who contribute to the economic vibrancy of our state.

On behalf of the undersigned Hispanic Chamber leaders the following are our recommendations for you and the Governor's Strike Force to consider as Texas goes back to our new normal:

Business Recommendations

- Work with the U.S. Treasury and Small Business Administration to ensure that Texas Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) can provide lending to Texas businesses. There is also a need to work with larger Texas financial institutions to follow the LiftFund/Goldman Sachs Model to have pass through money to provide more lending to Texas micro businesses.



- Provide essential business-related non-profit organizations classified as 501(c)6 to access state funding from the Governor's Office on Economic Development to provide technical assistance and resources to businesses during the reopening process. Chambers of Commerce in particular, are essential to their business members and have been impacted, they have yet to receive any relief from the federal government.
- These unprecedented challenges risk the financial stability that the State of Texas has historically had, that is why we believe that there's a need to allocate a portion of the Texas Rainy Day Fund to jump start the Texas economy and ensure that 30% of that funding is allocated to minority and economically disadvantaged communities.
- We urge you to waive any state inflicted fees for Hispanic and Minority-owned small businesses to get their enterprises back on track and defer these fees/payments through January 2021.
- Allow businesses who do not require extensive physical contact with customers to reopen, for example, auto shops, florists, research laboratories, and professional service firms.
- Include minority businesses in the State's procurement process to reopen Texas and allow them to provide goods and services to state agencies and or require Texas corporations to utilize Texas small businesses as we rebuild our state's economy.
- Consider the financial and regulatory needs of community colleges and other institutions of higher education, especially Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in Texas. Special consideration should be paid to those institutions that support economic development efforts, especially in majority Hispanic communities.
- Finally, provide local municipalities with state funding to restart their businesses and give them the ability through municipal grants to reduce local burdens such as utilities, waste management, and other local city services through fee waivers.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact C. LeRoy Cavazos-Reyna, Vice President of Government and International Affairs, LCavazos@ushcc.com or via phone at 956-844-9628. Thank you in advance for your consideration in this matter, we look forward to your positive response and collaboration on these important policy priorities as we reopen the Texas economy.

Sincerely,

Ramiro A. Cavazos
President and CEO
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

General Albert C. Zapanta
President and CEO
United States Mexico Chamber of Commerce

Samuel Guzman
Chairman of the Board
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C. LeRoy Cavazos-Reyna
Vice Chairman
Texas Border Coalition

John P. LaRue
President and CEO
United Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce

CC: Governor's Strike Force to Open Texas
Lt. Governor Dan Patrick
Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives Dennis Bonnen
Chairman Rafael Anchia, Mexican American Legislative Caucus (MALC)