



An Inside View of Key Task Force Comments to Opening Florida's Economy

This week, **Governor Ron DeSantis** assembled a diverse task force, comprised of regional and industry business leaders from across Florida which includes a long list of past and present volunteer leaders from the Florida Chamber. Their goal is to compile a list of recommendations to re-open Florida's economy. The Florida Chamber's Policy Team monitored every Task Force Working Group and Executive Committee meeting for our members. A summary of those meetings and discussions is below. We are soliciting your input if there is something you want the Governor and his Task Force members to know. We welcome any and all feedback which you can provide, simply email Florida Chamber **Executive Vice President David Hart** at dhart@flchamber.com.

Also, next Tuesday, April 28th at 1:00 p.m., the Florida Chamber will host a webinar on ***Florida's Economy: What the Road to Recovery Looks Like***. In addition to our **CEO Mark Wilson** and Chamber Foundation **Chief Economist Dr. Jerry Parrish**, Florida Chamber **Executive Vice President David Hart** will join the lineup to summarize some of the key themes from the Task Force's deliberations. You can register by going [here](#).

As everyone knows, Governor DeSantis' [Re-Open Florida Task Force](#) did their initial work this week and the Florida Chamber team was there every step of the way. **Governor Ron DeSantis'** diverse task force was comprised of business leaders, elected officials and health care professionals from across Florida to discuss and compile a list of recommendations to re-open Florida's economy. Special thanks to **Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nunez** and Governor DeSantis' **Chief of Staff Shane Strum** for leading this effort and for gathering so much input from so many sectors in such a short period of time. Small businesses are the lifeblood of Florida's economy and the Florida Chamber appreciates them being included in the input. In addition to the Executive Committee that included several Florida Chamber Board members, the task force consisted of three independent working groups:

- The Industry Working Group Related to Accommodation, Food, Tourism, Construction, Real Estate, Recreation, Retail and Transportation: *Led by **Dana Young**, President and CEO of VISIT Florida*
- The Industry Working Group Related to Administrative, Education, Information & Technology, Manufacturing, Mining, Utilities and Wholesale: *Led by **Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran***
- The Industry Working Group Related to Agriculture, Finance, Government, Healthcare, Management and Professional Services: *Led by **Senate President Designate Wilton Simpson***

For a list of all who served on the Executive Committee and the three Working Groups click [here](#). The meetings kicked off with an overview of our state's economy and impacted industry by Florida **Chamber President and CEO Mark Wilson** and Florida **Chamber Foundation Chief Economist Dr. Jerry Parrish**. To download the Florida Chamber and Florida Chamber's presentations to Governor DeSantis' Re-Open Florida Task Force, simply click [here](#). Mark Wilson and Dr. Parrish joined other virtual meetings and calls over the course of the week and provided the background data and analytics necessary to inform many of the discussions.

Throughout the week, each working group met daily and heard from the leaders of different impacted industry sectors. During the daily Re-Open Florida Task Force Executive Committee meeting, working group chairs presented the main themes and points from their earlier discussions before discussion. The overarching goal of their combined effort is to provide specific, tangible and relevant final recommendations to the Governor on safely re-starting Florida's economy.

All committee members were encouraged to provide their list of recommendations to the Governor's staff by Sunday, April 26th. Over the weekend, the Governor's budget and policy staff will be reviewing the recommendations and will present their staff report to the task force working groups and executive committee next week for final review and feedback. The Governor's office is looking for public comment. We encourage Florida Chamber members to share your thoughts through this [public information portal](#). Remember that your information and ideas likely become public the moment you submit them. If you'd rather talk about your concerns directly with the Florida Chamber, simply email **David Hart** at dhart@flchamber.com

For your reference, we have compiled many of the comments and proposed ideas from each Re-Open Florida Task Force call into the list below. We've provided these to you without comment or judgment of their merits, feasibility or impacts. If a recommendation or comment was raised by a specific member of a working group or of the executive committee, we endeavored to note that as well. Again, these are not Florida Chamber recommendations, per se, but rather a compilation of what was said by task force members during the meetings.

If you have any comments, or see an oversight related to your business, please let us know and we will make every effort to bring it to the attention of task force committee members.

Tourism, Construction, Real Estate, Recreation, Retail and Transportation

Recommendations by Working Group Task Force Members

General Comments-

- Provide broad guidance that if a business is able to meet minimum standards, they are able to be open, regardless of industry;
- Provide protections against liability related to COVID-19 for Florida businesses and government;
- Consider the mental health of employees, even those that have been furloughed and create a plan to ensure wellbeing;
- Need to recognize that sometimes there is conflicting guidance or that health guidelines have evolved and find ways to adapt while trying to provide clear and concise regulations;
- Create certification stickers for businesses that meet new safety standards;
- Need to announce timing of reopening so business and industry is able to prepare;
- Industry certifications should come from the industry itself;
- Relax certain regulations to allow businesses to operate but in a safe manner;
- As restrictions are loosened and the health and safety of Floridians improve, communicate guideline changes to businesses and the public.

Accommodation, Food and Tourism-

- Clear and concise minimum guidelines for the accommodation, food and tourism industry that focuses on employee safety, as well as safety of customers;
- Provide advance notice to businesses on a reopen date so they can prepare prior to reopening;
- Encourage Floridians to take in-state vacations to support Florida businesses;
- Have a phased-in tourism marketing plan to attract tourists to Florida;
- Provide liability protections for businesses from lawsuits arising out of COVID-19 unless there was intentional misconduct;
- Open beaches and other amenities with accommodations;
- Initial beach reopening can use Jacksonville as a model- open for recreation certain hours with public safety officials preventing loitering or group gatherings;
- Consider a hybrid model for restaurants, allowing them to still have takeout options while dining capacity is reduced;
- Open gradually and reduce restrictions over time as employees are trained, safety improves, and the spread of the virus decreases;
- Paid leave programs encourage employees not to come to work while sick;
- Sanitize and clean before reopening; train employees on increased hand washing; update floor plans to promote social distancing; don't allow people to congregate; screen employees and require sick employees to stay at home;
- Stagger employee schedules and prevent interaction between departments for lodging establishments;
- Eliminate or reduce checking-in and checking-out in person at lodging establishments.

Outdoor Recreation-

- Reopen beaches for recreational purposes while maintain social distancing and preventing gatherings;
- Re-categorize state parks into "high-intensity" and "low-intensity" and begin to reopen state parks based on types of recreation and how people might interact while maintain user and staff safety.

Retail-

- Quit thinking of businesses as “essential” and “non-essential”- it’s not what consumers shop for but how they shop;
- Allow retail businesses to reopen with social distancing guidelines and safety protocols;
- Create industry standards that are consistent across the state so businesses are following one set of standards;
- Committee members found overlap between retail and the accommodation, food and tourism sector in terms of the need for minimum safety protocols;
- Recognize that small businesses do not have the same resources as larger businesses and might not have the same access to PPE or the same types of employee screening.

Theme Parks & Attractions-

- Plans to enforce social distancing, increase sanitation and safety cleanings and using technology to adapt;
- Looking at ways to screen guests, as well as employees to increase safety;
- Need for guests to understand capacity limitations, safety protocols and social distancing guidelines to understand that the theme park industry is taking the issue very seriously.

Sports Industry-

- Initial re-opening of sports leagues will not include live audiences;
- Plans to enforce screening of players, quarantine players and staff to one location while traveling and use PPE and social distancing.

Real Estate-

- Provide reopening date so landlords and lenders can begin to work with businesses and individuals on payment plans;

Construction-

- Need consistent safety standards related to COVID across the state for construction workers;
- Maintain construction as being “essential,” especially going into hurricane season;
- Fast track shovel ready projects to keep construction workers employed. Projects are also cheaper right now and will be done faster.

Transportation-

- Increase cleaning and sanitation protocols for frequently touched surfaces in public spaces;
- Fund critical transportation projects to keep people employed, complete the jobs more quickly and in a less expensive way;
- Safe and clean experience needs to have throughout the travel experience, from Point A to Point B;
- Coordinate within the transportation industry and VISIT FL to share the safety story and show that it is safe to travel;
- Monitor and screen employees to ensure safety of the public and other employees;
- Refinance and extend current seaport bonds;
- Create a relief fund for ports that have also seen decreased revenue and capacity of passengers and containers as a result of COVID-19

Licensed Small Businesses (Barbershops/Cosmetology)-

- Provide resources or a grant for small businesses to purchase PPE;
- Re-educate licensed employees of best practices;
- Increase sanitation and social distancing;
- Focus on reopen strategies that do not add too many burdens and allow businesses to make additional decisions above and beyond;

- Many of these industries are already health and safety conscious so it's about updating safety guidelines to react to COVID-19;
- Require well ventilated areas; sanitized and new equipment between patrons; require masks and other PPE; limit the number of patrons; require a checklist posted in a conspicuous place upon patrons entering; record or log cleaning procedures.

Rural Communities & Minority-Owned Businesses-

- Allow rural communities to reopen;
- Need for financial resources for rural communities and minority-owned businesses;
- Promote entrepreneurship and business mentoring and coaching.

Large Gatherings, Events & Conventions-

- Consider guidelines such as square footage per attendee, biometric testing and other safety protocols to allow conventions and other large events to begin again.

Agriculture; Finance; Government; Healthcare; Management; Professional Services

Recommendations by Working Group Task Force Members

4/23/2020

- Florida healthcare associations need to cooperate and work together to write/develop a strategy to reopen the healthcare industry.
- There is a need to test patients for COVID-19 for high-risk procedures (typically ventilated procedures)
- Establish new screening questions the day of surgery to help determine if patient has COVID-19
- EO is set to expire May 8th, and should not be changed. Simply allow hospitals to open up elective surgeries May 9th. No need to do it any sooner.
- Hospitals need to anticipate a potential second wave of COVID-19 as we reopen the economy.
- Hospitals should have at least 15 days' worth of PPE, however 30 days would be ideal
- AHCA Secretary should assemble heads of each Florida HC associations to brainstorm how to move forward and that group should be formed today.
- Carlos Migoya w/ Jackson Health – This task force should recommend to the Gov. that more State and Federal funds be directed to the hospital systems. That recommendation should look the PPE program
- John Couris – Hospitals and surgery centers should go live at the same time May 9th.
- Rep. Leek
 - Need a targeted geographic approach when opening hospitals to elective surgeries.
 - Nurses/Doctors have licenses that are set to expire, Gov should extend those licenses
 - A wave a litigation may come after COVID-19 and the Gov needs to protect them
- Rep. Cummings – Need more discussion from local dentists and if there is a game plan for them.
 - Florida Dental Association – Many local dental offices have donated PPE to emergency responders. Dentists now need to be moved to an essential service to replenish those donated supplies.

- Commissioner Brian Hamman w/ Lee County Commission – Concerns from local governments and the need to make data available. Had more comments but couldn't hear due to feedback
- David Strong w/ Orlando Health – Unintended consequences of pausing elective surgeries need to be taken into consideration. Delays for 1-2 weeks may be acceptable, but 6-8 may not be. Need to look at regional and local environment.
- Kevin Cairns w/ Florida Board of Medicine – Since we are seeing a flattening of new cases, many non-COVID-19 patients are suffering b/c they cannot have “elective surgeries” Gov. office should consider quality of life of patients.
 - Also, need to prioritize those individuals who are in chronic pain
- Sen. Bradley – Hospitals are on the frontline and Senate needs to do everything it can to support them. Less revenue due to COVID-19, but also increased costs in treating COVID-19. New protocols are necessary, but elective surgeries need to reopen. Supports opening regionally if needed. Also supports more financial support for hospitals.

4/24/2020

- Steve Bahmer, CEO of LeadingAge:
 - Prioritization of PPE – Need to source and secure PPE to providers but more is needed. Burn rates have increased for PPE as well.
 - Wide spread and frequent testing, with rapid results, is paramount to providers. Continuous testing is needed.
 - Clear and consistent protocols once reopened. And clear guidance from regulatory agencies. Best practices need to be consistent across industry sector.
 - Collaboration between the long-term providers and hospitals will be needed going forward. Strategic partnerships
 - Liability concerns. Focus needs to be on delivering care, not worried about future law suits
 - Occupancy is down for many long-term care facilities. And costs have been increasing due to COVID-19. Financial support will be needed outside of the CARES Act
- Cassandra Pasley, Division Director, Medical Quality Assurance, Florida Department of Health:
 - Temporary reactivations of inactive licenses pursuant to section 381.00315(1)(c)3, Florida Statutes, of:
 - medical doctors, osteopathic physicians, physician assistants, licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, advanced practice registered nurses, respiratory therapists, emergency medical technicians and paramedics
 - Expedited licensure for essential health care practitioners
 - Allow telehealth as much as possible/appropriate
- Dr. Rudy Liddell, President, Board of Trustees, Florida Dental Association
 - Ask Gov to put more money into bridge loans for dental offices.
 - Recommends using best PPE available. Think the n95 masks. And level 3 masks
 - Dentists are currently not considered as essential front-line providers, ask Gov to reassign them so they can request PPE purchases

- John Couris - Nursing home suggestion to the Gov would be PPE's pipeline is improving, but still difficult to obtain. Nursing home facilities can work with local hospitals to include additional PPE for the nursing homes. Include a requirement to the Gov. that health systems meet with skilled nursing facilities.
- Amy Mercer, Executive Director, Florida Police Chiefs Association
 - Adequately supplying law enforcement personnel with necessary PPE gear.
 - Adequately supplying rapid, reliable COVID-19 testing for first responders that occurs every two weeks, at low or no cost, which is consistent with the White House re-Open America plan.
 - State government must be a source of uniform, consistent, coordinated, and specific guidance not open to interpretation, and easily followed by local elected officials.
 - State government must communicate their decisions early to provide our agencies with the lead time necessary to adapt and properly – and safely – implement an Order.
 - Recommend that re-opening should be done in phases to manage what we expect to be a surge of pent up demand for business, recreation, and entertainment.

Administrative, Education, Information & Technology, Manufacturing, Mining, Utilities and Wholesale
Recommendations by Working Group Task Force Members

The Florida Department of Emergency Management (DEM) is used to shelters and evacuations. They are looking at changing that concept for early storms, putting people in hotels instead of schools and shelters. The worry is that a mass shelter could be a super spreading event.

- Perhaps stay-at-home orders could be tailored to risk assessment for homes based on construction date and neighborhoods based on flood risk to limit the number of evacuees.
- DEM is working with FEMA to consider using hotels for shelter, with FEMA picking up the tab. This could be helpful to hotels, but might use some of the same hotels that utilities use for out of state relief contractors.
- DEM expects to work closer with local governments than ever before. Talking with county Emergency Managers now.
- DEM recommends that employers get PPE now for employees ahead of an early storm. Guidance could ask for PPE for seven days, food for seven days.
- Expects to have guidance finalized in two weeks.

Overview of Impact to Early Education

- Chancellor Hall had concerns about the overall impact to Florida students, and brought up similar concerns of how parents are able to keep up with online education.
- Early Learning mentioned concern about their budget moving into a recession.
- Mention of county-by-county solutions needed.
- Talking about the efforts the state colleges are implementing for people to return to finish degrees or certificates in order to prepare workforce for the rebound. Mentioned to counter-cyclical demand for state colleges when jobs are scarce.
- Despite the above, some state colleges are expecting a slight drop in enrollment as money tightens up.

Steps recommended for Manufacturing Centers

- Same issues of PPE and some sharing of HR policies implemented to keep manufacturers running. Measures included temperature checks, personal purchase of masks, and distancing.

Re-Open Florida Task Force Executive Committee

Additional Recommendations Mentioned by Task Force Members

4/20/2020

- 25 to 50 percent occupancy for restaurants, reservations required
- Elective surgeries - Surgeon General Rivkees wants to begin restarting

4/21/2020

- Add additional tables or add additional outdoor space to help restaurants have more space

4/22/2020

- Joe York – Create a set of principles for moving forward that put safety first, are data driven, coordinated, guidelines that complement federal guidelines, help access to critical resources and supplies (to include testing and monitoring), help access to supply chains, and address vital workers and community needs- need access to childcare, transportation, etc.
- Additional sovereign immunity for local governments

Previous Task Force meeting agendas and presentations are provided online at www.flgov.com/COVID-19.

Audio recordings for all previous Task Force meetings are available online at www.thefloridachannel.org.

For the most up to date info for business anywhere, the Florida Chamber's daily [COVID-19 Membership Update](#) is your best source of information. [Sign up](#) for this daily newsletter.