

## A LETTER FROM ELKHART COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS

Dear Community of Elkhart County,

The last two weeks, since the World Health Organization declared the new coronavirus outbreak a pandemic, Elkhart County and the rest of the State of Indiana has had to move quickly to learn as much as we could about the impact to our community and prepare for a possible local outbreak.

We have worked hard together to keep each other informed and make adjustments to protect our communities. Many other organizations that work closely with local government have greatly stepped in this time of uncertainty. Your health and wellbeing is of greatest importance to us.

Of note was the response of all the schools in Elkhart County, which made the difficult decision to close down even before the statewide school closure order was given. The schools acted out of informed precaution and should be commended for not only leading the way in preventing exposure, but also for their remarkable efforts to make sure students continue to receive education and meals in this time of crisis.

We would like to continue offering our support to Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb and his staff as we all continue to learn about what we are dealing with. We also would like to thank the businesses, organizations, churches and individuals throughout Elkhart County for complying with the governor's executive order to temporarily close down and stay home.

The governor's executive order went into effect March 25, and requires of all Indiana residents to practice social distancing by staying home, except for matters of health and safety, until 11:59 p.m. April 6. These measures are in place to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our state.

The pace in our community has slowed significantly, showing that many had complied with the Governor's order to stay home. This is what we need to be doing if we want to stay ahead of the virus.

Closing down businesses will not come without an economic cost, but we need to look at the health and safety of the people on our community as top priority. The sooner we adhere to the order, the more effectively we mitigate the spread of the infection and the faster our economy will recover.

Just like those businesses that have voluntarily complied with the governor's order by opting to close to mitigate the viral spread, we recognize how important it is for those providing essential services to our community continue to do so: hospitals and healthcare facilities, doctors' offices, mail services, gas stations, grocery stores and local government staff, among others. Those businesses must remember to continue making necessary adjustments at their workplaces to have social distancing, cleaned and disinfected work surfaces and allowing employees to wash their hands with soap and water and to stay home if sick.

Of our residents, we ask they stay as healthy as possible so if they encounter a virus, their body's immune system is primed to defend them from illness. Eat 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day, exercise regularly, get 7 to 9 hours of sleep and try to manage stress as best you can.

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security has additional information of what an essential service in the context of this health crisis is through their list of frequently asked questions, which can be found here: [in.gov/dhs/4434.htm](https://www.in.gov/dhs/4434.htm). Businesses in need of further guidance can call the Critical Industries Hotline at 877.820.0890 or email [covidresponse@iedc.in.gov](mailto:covidresponse@iedc.in.gov).

Together,

Commissioner Frank Lucchese

Mayor Phil Jenkins

Commissioner Suzanne Weirick

Mayor Rod Roberson

Commissioner Mike Yoder

Mayor Jeremy Stutsman