

18TH DISTRICT

LISA M. BOSCOLA  
SENATE BOX 203018  
THE STATE CAPITOL  
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-3018  
717-787-4236  
FAX: 717-783-1257

ONE EAST BROAD STREET • SUITE 120  
BETHLEHEM, PA 18018  
610-868-8667  
FAX: 610-861-2184  
TOLL FREE: 1-877-535-1818

1701 WASHINGTON BOULEVARD  
EASTON, PA 18042  
610-250-5627 • 610-250-5629  
FAX: 610-250-1889



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TWITTER: @senlisaboscola  
FACEBOOK: facebook.com/SenLisaBoscola  
WEB: www.senatorboscola.com

**Senate of Pennsylvania**

May 8, 2020

The Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
225 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf:

I am asking you to consider moving the Lehigh Valley into the yellow phase of re-opening immediately. This request comes on the heels of two separate conversations I had with the infectious disease doctors at both St. Luke's University Health Network and Lehigh Valley Health Network. These conversations took place in open forums and the doctors were unequivocal about where they thought the Lehigh Valley stood in terms of activity levels at this time.

Obviously, the decision of when to re-open any county or geographic area is not easy. So, I do not make this request lightly. I recognize a great deal goes into your determination. However, it is my belief that the expert opinions of the infectious disease specialists from the largest health care providers in the Lehigh Valley that state our region should be moved to the yellow phase of reopening should not be ignored.

We all recognize that opening in the yellow phase does not mean a return to business as usual. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Dr. Luther Rhodes (Lehigh Valley Health Network) and Dr. Jeffery Jahre (St. Luke's University Health Network) both emphasized the need to continue to social distance, wear masks and validate that when we open more businesses there is not a surge in cases. However, both doctors noted that we know so much more about the disease today than we did 7 weeks ago. There are better treatment protocols, better supplies, a better understanding of precautions we need to take and just a better understanding of the virus.

These doctors are not downplaying the virus. In fact, they have treated the most critically ill-patients in the Lehigh Valley, so they have a firm understanding of the devastation the virus causes to some patients. However, the vast majority of patients do not require hospitalizations. Dr. Jahre suggested in my teletown hall that a more objective indicator for moving phases would be the number of hospitalizations rather than simply the number of positive tests.

Dr. Rhodes noted in an interview with PBS-39 that he “couldn’t emphasize strongly enough” that the Lehigh Valley should be in the yellow heading towards green. He feared that we are locked in the initial recoil of the virus. In the interview, he noted that “there are no medical contra-indications at all to getting people out and about with common sense, with masks and social distancing.” In fact, both doctors agreed that with appropriate social distancing measures, such as masks and crowd limitations we could handle activities currently relegated to the green phase such as nail salons and hair-cuts.

Both doctors noted that validating there is no increase in cases is needed during the gradual re-opening, so we know whether it is working. When the initial order to shut down businesses came out, your press secretary noted that “By limiting exposure with business closings, fewer Pennsylvanians will become sick at the same time, fewer will die and we can prevent the worst case scenario for our health care professionals.” I am not pretending to know more than the experts. I am advocating for the shift to yellow based solely upon what the local experts treating the sickest patients in the Lehigh Valley believe we should be doing here in the Lehigh Valley.

It is critical that the public and business owners adhere to responsible social distancing guidelines for the success of any re-opening plan. I believe the people of the Lehigh Valley understand the importance of social distancing practices and will adhere to them during this phase of the re-opening with the goal of getting to green. To that end, I ask that you consider moving the Lehigh Valley into the yellow phase of reopening today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa M. Boscola". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and "B".

**Lisa M. Boscola**  
State Senator – 18<sup>th</sup> District