



Coalition for a
Strong Virginia Economy

March 29, 2021

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor
Commonwealth of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Open Letter to Governor Ralph Northam and the Virginia General Assembly

Dear Governor Northam:

We appreciate the challenge of governing during a global pandemic. Social distancing, enhanced sanitation, remote work, and economic hardship have become normalized over the last year, but these circumstances were always intended to be temporary. As we examine the infection and vaccination data, Virginia must chart a new path to open the economy. The survival of many businesses may depend upon it.

Virginia now has an estimated [606,000](#) people with SARS-CoV-2 Virus antibodies from being infected; [1.1 million](#) people fully vaccinated; [2 million](#) people with at least one vaccination dose; and a reasonable expectation that 3 million more citizens could be vaccinated by June 1, 2021. This would mean Virginia could reach the 70 percent “herd immunity” threshold and justify the transition back to normalcy.

Virginia has also tragically experienced 8,484 confirmed deaths of our fellow citizens due to COVID-19 and 75% of those deaths have been exclusively within the [population 70 or older](#). That entire population now can be vaccinated immediately in [Phase 1b](#) and has a low labor participation rate.

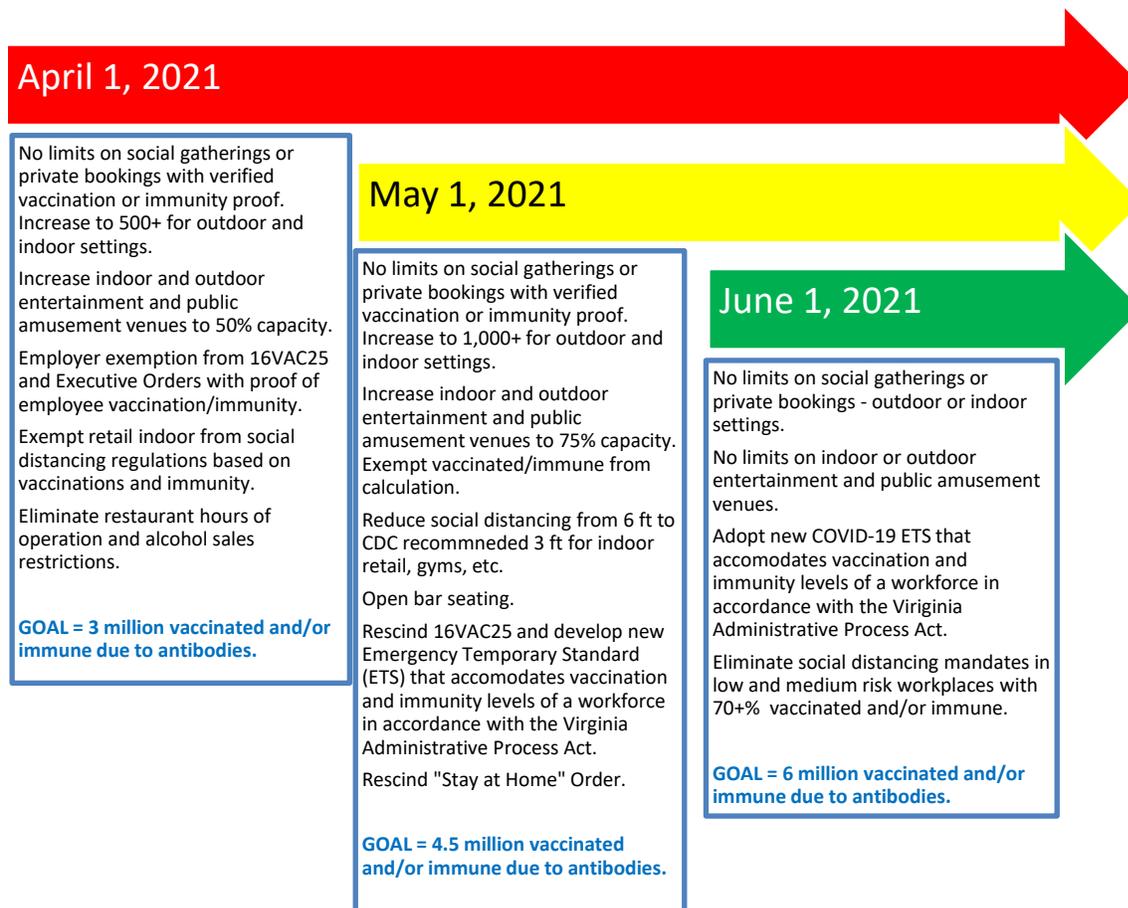
The Coalition for a Strong Virginia Economy is seeking three specific provisions to support the business community in its safe return to normal operations: 1) expanded vaccination access through voluntary employer resources; 2) new workplace safety guidelines for employees and customers that have been vaccinated or are immune; and 3) a timeline with data-driven health milestones that would lead to a fully open economy by June 1, 2021. This is the time for a reward-based “moon shot” challenge to the public. The perpetual uncertainty of regulations, executive orders, phases, immunity levels, infections, etc. is not motivating and is confusing. It is time to set new goals focused on an open economy.

Accelerating the distribution of the vaccine will bring the Commonwealth closer to “herd immunity” levels. It will also combat “COVID fatigue” and end the negative physical, mental,

and financial health effects that are directly attributable to isolation and economic hardship. These effects on our employees and families have been overlooked. An immediate and robust expansion of vaccination access through voluntary employer resources, such as on-premise clinics or mobile healthcare units, as was enabled by [HB2328](#), [HB2333](#), and [SB1445](#) this legislative session, is vital.

Employers require a new set of COVID-19 regulations for employees and customers that have been vaccinated or are immune. Individuals with proof of vaccination or proof of antibodies through [PCR or Antigen tests](#) should be entirely exempt from all COVID-19 related regulations and executive orders. We would also argue that at some level of vaccination and immunity, perhaps a 70% "[herd immunity](#)" vaccination plus antibody immunity level, all low and medium risk workplaces should be exempt from six-foot social distancing and occupancy limits at a minimum. Another recommendation is to allow all businesses to exempt people with proof of vaccination or PCR Tests or Antigen Tests from occupancy limits, private event regulations/restrictions, social gathering regulations/restrictions, and public gathering regulations/restrictions.

Conceptually, the type of timeline and milestones that should be considered in the new open economy plan are as follows:



We must begin rebuilding our businesses and our lives. We can do so safely, and the time is now. **It is time to focus on a new and inspirational timeline and milestones that will safely lead to an open economy by June 1, 2021.** The business community looks forward to working with you to fully open the economy. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

COALITION FOR A STRONG VIRGINIA ECONOMY

Associated Builders & Contractors of Virginia, Sterling, VA
Associated General Contractors of Virginia, Glen Allen, VA
Hampton Roads Chamber, Norfolk, VA
Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce, Harrisonburg, VA
National Federation of Independent Business, Richmond, VA
Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce, Tysons Corner, VA
Northern Virginia Transportation Business Coalition, McLean, VA
Precast Concrete Association of Virginia, Richmond, VA
Richmond Area Municipal Contractors Association, Richmond, VA
Shellfish Growers of Virginia, Gloucester, VA
Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy, Alexandria, VA
Virginia Assisted Living Association, Glen Allen, VA
Virginia Association of Roofing Professionals, Richmond, VA
Virginia Association for Home Care & Hospice, Richmond, VA
Virginia Automatic Merchandising Association, Richmond, VA
Virginia Contractor Procurement Alliance, Henrico, VA
Virginia Forestry Association, Richmond, VA
Virginia Forest Products Association, Sandston, VA
Virginia Loggers Association, Goochland, VA
Virginia Manufactured and Modular Housing Association, Richmond, VA
Virginia Manufacturers Association, Richmond, VA
Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Hampton, VA
Virginia Retail Federation, Richmond, VA
Virginia Seafood Council, Newport News, VA
Virginia Trucking Association, Richmond, VA
Virginia Veterinary Medical Association, Henrico, VA
Virginia Wholesalers & Distributors Association, Richmond, VA

CC: Clark Mercer, Chief of Staff; Secretary of Commerce & Trade Brian Ball; Stephen Moret, VEDP; Virginia General Assembly