



April 30, 2020

The Honorable Larry Hogan
101 State Circle
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Tourism/Retail Task Force Recommendations

Governor Hogan,

Thank you for recognizing retail as a key sector in Maryland's economy. As you are aware, Maryland retailers directly and indirectly employ over 750,000 Marylanders, making our industry one of the largest in the State. We appreciate the strong actions you have taken to ensure the safety of Marylanders and welcome the opportunity to provide input reopening Maryland's economy. Retailers must be able to operate effectively under any new policies to achieve the best outcomes. Ultimately, we all have the same goal – to reopen Maryland safely, as soon as possible. We implore you to take the following recommendations into consideration.

The Retail Task Force evaluated blueprints put together from national partners at the National Retail Federation and Retail Industry Leaders Association, examined other state plans, consulted with a variety of sectors of retail (both open and closed), and took into consideration retailers of all sizes. We developed recommendations that we strongly believe meet national and state public health considerations and the Executive Orders you have issued. If these recommendations are adopted, the Retail Task Force believes it is safe to reopen Maryland in phases, beginning immediately.

The Task Force has identified critical industry needs and urges prioritization of these requests in the plan to reopen Maryland.

1. Identifying or creating a hub for PPE.
2. Liability protection for all businesses.
3. Providing industry with specific guidance as outlined below and preventing a patchwork of policies and enforcement.
4. Help connect businesses to Maryland agencies, local government resources, consultants and counseling programs to assist with reopening and sustaining business operations.
5. Allow self-inspections at the business level, recognizing that local Health Departments may be overwhelmed.
6. State assistance with business signage, reopen checklist, daily checklist (See examples below).
7. Open curbside immediately for all businesses that can comply.
8. Standardize all health and law enforcement inspection forms.
9. Provide customers and retailers with a State-approved checklist (See examples attached).

Below you will find recommendations for various stages of reopening, checklists for customers and retailers, and health, operations and logistics protections and considerations for businesses.





STAGES OF REOPENING

Following the staged approach as outlined in “Maryland’s Road Map to Recovery,” Stage One, as outlined below, should begin as soon as the following recommendations can be met. We believe the recommendations in Stage One can be met immediately. The following stages should proceed according to the 14-day intervals of plateauing or declining statistics as referenced in the Road Map.

Stage One (ASAP)

Continuing to Implement Stay-at-Home Order; Stage One Applies to Essential Businesses Only

Ship-from-Store (SFS) and Limited-contact curbside pickup at stores based on online or phone orders

- Utilize limited/minimal associates working in the store at one time
- Adhere to all applicable requirements of the Maryland Stay at Home Order and CDC social distancing guidance
- Use of masks and/or gloves by associates
- Hand sanitizer (touchless dispensers strongly recommended) available for employees subject to market availability
- Consider whether screening associates before work is feasible and effective

Limited contact services in stores

- Operate by appointment only
- Utilize limited/minimal associates working at one time
- Adhere to all applicable requirements of the Maryland Stay at Home Order and CDC social distancing guidance, including signage and floor markings to ensure proper social distancing
- Use of masks and/or gloves by associates (encourage use by customers through signage)
- Hand sanitizer (touchless dispensers strongly recommended) available for employees and customers, subject to market availability
- No more than one customer in social distanced waiting area at one time; two if immediate family members
- Offer curbside check-in and pick-up if applicable
- Sneeze guards or similar barriers between employee(s) and customers
- Encourage use of cashless payment methods
- Sanitize surfaces and equipment between customers
- In-store food service take-out only
- Consider whether screening associates before work is feasible and effective

Stage Two (Near-Term When Appropriate)

Restoring Limited Non-Essential Retail/Business Capacity

- Utilize limited associates working at one time
- Adhere to CDC social distancing guidance
- Use of masks and/or gloves by associates (encourage use by customers through signage)





- Hand sanitizer (touchless dispensers strongly recommended) available for employees and for customers in heavily-trafficked areas, subject to market availability
- Continue online ordering with delivery or contactless curbside check-in and pick-up, if available
- Stores with more than one customer entrance utilize one for entrance and the other for exit, with staffing to ensure enforcement of maximum capacity requirement
- Utilize floor markings throughout the store/mall to ensure proper social distancing, especially in queues
- Signage at entrance, throughout sales areas, customer service, and employee break room reinforcing social distancing, enhanced sanitization techniques, importance of masks and/or gloves, etc.
- Enhanced monitoring for social distancing adherence
- Enhanced cleaning of high-traffic, high-touch areas including, but not limited to, fitting rooms, benches/seating, restrooms, check-out, and break room
- In-store/in-mall services operational, adhering to all requirements for non-essential businesses and operations and implementing recommendations appropriate to the service
- Disconnect or cover water fountains
- Food service take-out only
- Sneeze guards or similar barriers between employee(s) and customers
- Encourage use of cashless payment methods
- Sanitize surfaces and equipment between customers
- Disinfecting/quarantine methods/policies for clothing and footwear tried on by customers as well as returns, as deemed medically necessary by health authorities
- Consider whether screening associates before work is feasible and effective

Stage Three (When Appropriate)

Relaxation of Certain Requirements of Phase Two such as:

- Number of employees permitted to work at one time
- Number of customers permitted in store/mall at one time
- Enhanced signage and monitoring
- Allowing sanitization at intervals instead of between each customer
- Use of masks and/or gloves and sneeze guards or other similar barriers
- Disinfecting/quarantine methods/policies for clothing and footwear tried on by customers as well as returns, as deemed medically necessary by health authorities
- Screening associates before work

Stage Four (WHEN APPROPRIATE)

New normal without restrictions but continued efforts to ensure customer and employee safety.

LOGISTICS AND OPERATIONS

The following lists are recommendations for continued operations and preparation for reopening based on industry best practices.





Facilities: Preparing the Store for Opening

- For leased properties, work with your landlord and your local jurisdiction to obtain early access to store location to ready it for return-to-work (deep cleaning, retrofitting as necessary for new regulations, installation of new signage [see below], etc.).
- Thoroughly inspect facilities for any damage or issues caused by vacancy including mechanical, air, and water systems.
- Clean and prepare equipment for startup; install sneeze guards or other protective measures as necessary and/or required.
- Consider facility enhancements such as increased fresh air circulation, installing highest efficiency rated filter recommended or allowed by manufacturer.
- Identify which vendors and/or distribution centers are functioning, and the extent to which they may be delayed or limited in their operations. Establish contingency plan for vendor disruptions.
- Establish protocol for monitoring store occupancy (metering) in compliance with any applicable laws or Executive Orders.
- If applicable, establish procedure for use of escalators and elevators to avoid crowding (e.g., elevator attendants, queue management for waiting passengers, etc.).
- In multi-tenant situations, obtain clarity on *what* customer screening (e.g., temperature) may be required and *who* will perform it (landlord on behalf of all mall tenants, each individual tenant, etc.).
- If customer screening is to occur within your store, identify an appropriate location for such screening (such that privacy and social distancing protocols are respected).
- Familiarize yourself with new signage requirements & needs (occupancy, social distancing, customer flow, BOPIS, etc.).
- Consider the public relations and health & safety (e.g., capacity) concerns related to any promotional signage you might otherwise normally employ.
- Consider whether you need to limit quantities of certain items or implement other anti-hoarding signage.

Supply Chain & Inventory

- Assess supply needs and explore options for sourcing additional supplies required for business operations; assess how to best leverage existing relationships with vendors.
- Create a plan for how you will source and distribute cleaning products and PPE, accounting for existing and/or future shortages. Establish a protocol to monitor this on a frequent basis as rules and health guidance ebb and flow with the prevalence of the virus.
- If you have international operations, consider current challenges with respect to shipping certain products (such as PPE) across borders. You may have to modify your traditional supply chain routing.
- Establish procedure for regularly disinfecting inventory and newly-received deliveries.
- Establish protocols for handling and processing shipping and receipts (including disinfection).
- Evaluate current situation as it relates to ports of entry and trucking logistics for your product. Will this impact your ability to timely re-supply, both now and in the medium term? Keep an eye out for future legislation which might have the effect of requiring truck drivers to quarantine upon crossing state-lines, etc., thereby further disrupting the supply chain.





Business Hours

- Adjust store hours of operation, as necessary, to support social distancing efforts by limiting store traffic.
- Ensure staff has sufficient time to rest, sanitize and restock inventory.
- Consider offering seniors and other high-risk individuals exclusive hours.
- Consider increasing pickup hours to serve more online customers.

Establish Protocol for Vendors & Non-Employees

- Notify vendors of re-opening, and any revised protocol as it relates to store entry, deliveries, paperwork, etc.
- Consider implementing measures to ensure vendor safety, including:
 - Disabling/suspending access (e.g., temporarily suspending all non-employee truck drivers from entering stores, warehouses and manufacturing plants).
 - Transitioning to contactless signatures/e-signatures for deliveries.
 - Requesting that vendors accessing your store locations to direct their employees follow all social distancing guidelines and health directives issued by the applicable public authorities.

Security Operations

- Revise security protocol to conform to local & state health directives.
- Consider in-store announcements to remind customers of proper traffic flow and queuing protocols.
- Evaluate how your anti-shoplifting procedures should change in the COVID-19 era.
- Consider employee training in safe de-escalation - both in the case of shoplifting as well as customer violation of health and safety rules.

Promote “Contactless” Shopping Options

- Online Shopping with local delivery.
- Contactless payment options (e.g., RFID credit and debit cards, Apple Pay, Pay Pal, etc.).
- Self-checkout.
- Pickup and delivery services.

HEALTH POLICIES, PRACTICES, ENGINEERING CONTROLS, AND PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

The following lists are recommendations for emphasizing and prioritizing employee and customer health, based on industry best practices.

Social Distancing:

- Place signage in conspicuous locations throughout the store, including particularly high-traffic areas such as entrances and exits, checkouts, fitting rooms, etc. Signage may include:
 - Asking invitees and employees not to enter the store if they are sick or have felt sick within the last 72 hours.





- Encouraging invitees and employees to maintain six feet of distance at all times, per CDC guidelines.
- Floor markers located six feet apart any place where invitees are likely to queue.
- Entrance-exit or one-way only signs.
- Recommended hygiene practices, how to stop the spread of germs.
- CDC posters promoting frequent and thorough handwashing in all restrooms.
- Requesting customers temporarily cease using reusable bags, or to bag their own purchases if they choose to use reusable bags, and to clean reusable bags.
- Information on pick-up/carryout options.
- Consider programming in-store audio messaging to frequently remind employees and customers to follow CDC guidance on hygiene and physical distancing.
- For high-traffic retailers and retailers with checkout counters that do not allow adequate distance between the customer and employee, consider installing Plexiglas “sneeze-guards.”
- If capacity limits are implemented, place distance markers outside of stores to allow for queuing while maintaining physical distance; employees can also be assigned to assist customers with waiting to enter.
- To the extent possible, use of point-of-sale terminals and other workstations should be staggered.
- Implement and encourage use of contactless payment options for employees and patrons, and contactless signatures for deliveries. If contactless signature for deliveries is not possible, require employees to use own pen.
- Where possible, employee shifts and meal breaks should be staggered to avoid crowding.
- High-traffic areas should be widened to the extent store configuration allows.

Face Masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

- Encourage or require employees and customers to wear approved facial coverings, gloves, and personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times, if possible.
- Offer face masks and/or PPE to customers who enter the store without any, if possible.
- Determine whether employees will be permitted to use their own face masks and PPE, and on what terms and conditions, with special attention to potential use of filtering face-piece respirators (e.g. N95 or equivalent).
- Designate receptacles for discarded face masks and PPE.

Cleaning / Sanitization:

- Obtain cleaning products that are on the EPA’s List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2.
- Cleaning “kits” including disinfectant wipes or sprays, disposable gloves, paper towels, masks, hand sanitizer and other cleaning supplies are readily accessible throughout store, including point of sale terminals and other stations that will be cleaned periodically throughout the day.
- Have hand sanitizer available throughout store for customers and employee use, including store entrance(s) and checkouts.
- Implement a cleaning regime that targets frequently touched surfaces and spaces, which are most likely to result in the transmission of communicable diseases.
 - General:





- Shopping carts and baskets
- Door and drawer handles
- Light and other power switches (consider signage to keep lights on at all times, or utilizing motion sensor capabilities)
- Shared tools such as pricing guns, pallet jacks, tape guns, box cutters, etc.
- Chairs, tables, and benches
- Vending machines and self-serve kiosks
- Refrigerators, microwave, and other frequently touched objects and surfaces in employee facilities
- Time clocks
- Point of sale/checkout:
 - Cash register, including touch screens, keyboards, mouse
 - PIN pads (touch screen, keypad, pen)
 - Checkout counter and/or conveyor belt
 - Cabinet pulls
 - Checkout dividers
- Restrooms (consider temporarily closing restrooms to public, if possible):
 - Door handles and flush levers
 - Toilet bowl and toilet paper holder
 - Sinks and faucets
 - Paper towel holders and/or air dryers
 - Diaper-changing stations
- Sales floor
 - Fixtures with handles or pulls
 - Any other “high touch” surfaces

Employee Training:

- Social distancing guidelines and expectations.
- How to monitor personal health and body temperature at home. Self-screening form from Maryland Department of Health with symptom checks.
- How to properly wear, remove, and dispose of face masks and PPE.
- Guidance on how to launder cloth face masks and uniforms.
- Cleaning protocol, including how to safely and effectively use cleaning supplies

On behalf of the Retail Task Force, we thank you in advance for your time and consideration. Should you need anything further, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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MARYLAND RETAILERS ASSOCIATION

The Voice of Retailing in Maryland



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Sincerely,



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