



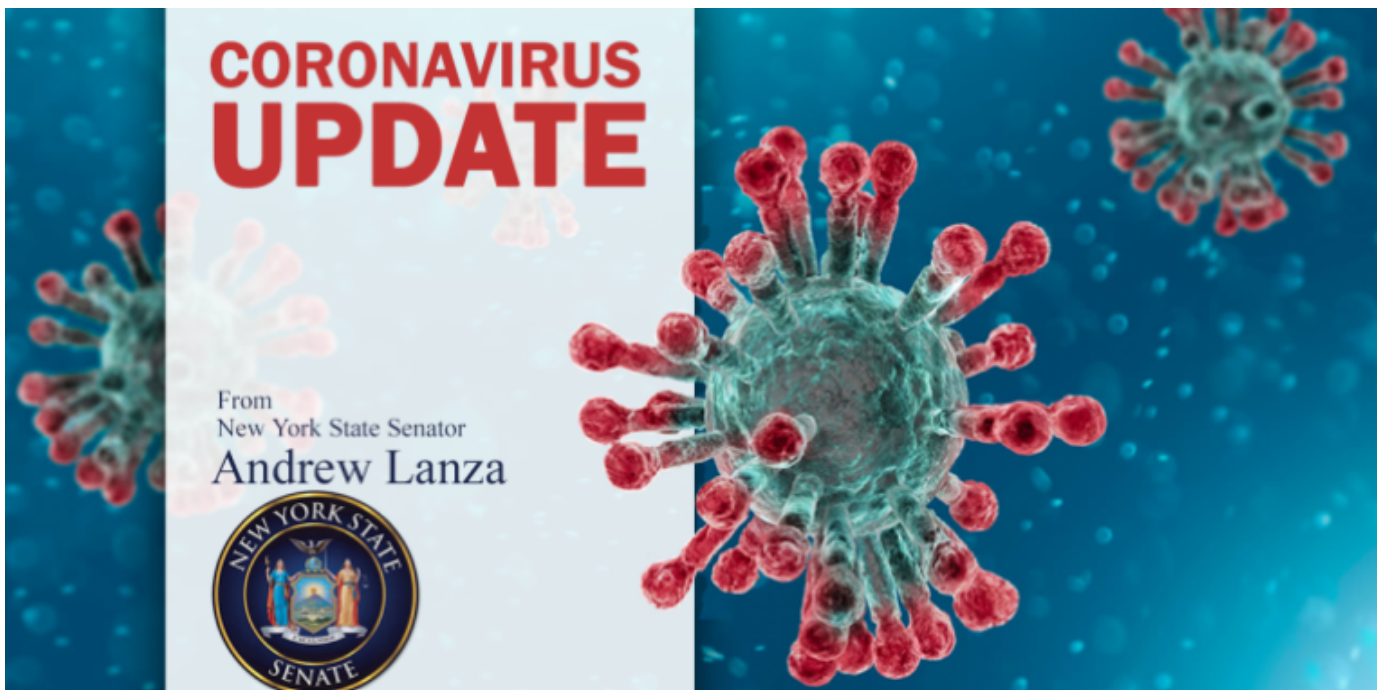
NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

Staten Island: Re-Opening for Business

ANDREW J. LANZA June 19, 2020

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19**



Dear Neighbor,

I hope this finds you well. These past three months have been unprecedented and filled with uncertainty. In the face of the COVID-19 health crisis, Staten Islanders did all we were asked to do to keep our loved ones and neighbors safe. We also joined together with incredible fortitude to express our unyielding appreciation for those who kept this community running safely – medical staff, police officers, firefighters, EMTs, transit workers, sanitation workers, supermarket employees, and so many others. We supported those who became sick and we

mourn together for those families who lost loved ones.

While our front line workers have been doing everything they can to ensure our needs have been met, many others have been eagerly waiting to return to work. I have spoken with countless entrepreneurs, small business operators, and workers from many sectors of our economy who have been pleading for the date when they can return to work. The commonality of their message is a belief that at this point in time, all businesses are essential.

I have been fighting both the Governor and the Mayor to follow the numbers and let us have our lives back before businesses and families are destroyed in a way that even the virus could not do. We must honor safety protocols and common sense but the cure cannot be worse than the disease. I believe my battle has yielded encouraging news from the State; however, some NYC politicians are now acting like they will threaten our progress. If the only thing they respect is protest, we must prepare.

Because of the incredible efforts Staten Islanders have taken, it has been clear to me for many weeks that Staten Island is ready to re-open safely for business. The stats regarding infection and hospitalization rates confirm that this is the case. In fact, although Staten Island saw one of the highest infection rates in all of New York State, our hospitalization rate has remained significantly lower than the rest of the City for more than two months. It is Staten Islanders who overwhelmingly did as they were asked and socially distanced, and when that wasn't possible, they wore masks.

Thousands of Staten Islanders have called and emailed my office seeking assistance and sharing their ideas and concerns. Together, we continue to do all we can to ease the extraordinary burdens Staten Islanders face. The overall health of our community includes our physical and mental well-being. We also must consider our ability to take care of our

families.

Frustratingly, while I have been calling for Staten Island to re-open for business, others in government, including Mayor de Blasio, have stood in the way, keeping our community's re-opening tied completely to the statistics of the other four boroughs. Last week I met with several dozen local restaurant owners to talk about the incredible challenges facing them and their uncertainty as to "if" they can ever recover. I have had these same conversations with those who operate childcare facilities, personal care businesses, boutique shops, athletic programs for youth, and so many others.

Over these several months, we have seen some in government pick winners and losers – who can be open for business and who cannot. Many of you have helped to highlight the confusion that has emanated from some of these disjointed determinations.

Last week, when New York City entered phase 1 of the re-opening plan, many questions remained. I have continued urging for the immediate re-opening for our Staten Island businesses. We take the lessons learned seriously and know what we need to do to keep our most vulnerable safe. If we can shop at big-box retailers safely then why can we not expect the same for our small businesses? Our small businesses are owned by our neighbors and they are dying as I write this.

Yesterday, Governor Cuomo announced that New York City is on track to enter phase 2 of the re-opening plan this coming Monday, June 22nd. As per the State's guidelines, this means that outdoor dining, hair salons, barbershops, in-store retail, car dealerships, and real estate firms are expected to be able to join construction and other phase 1 businesses that have already returned to work.

It is concerning that City Hall remains evasive regarding any new restrictions it may make to further delay re-openings. Any such determination by City Hall will surely destroy any last bits of hope these businesses still have to recover from this devastating time. I am urging City Hall to do the right thing and not stand in the way of getting our small businesses back to work. All of you have done your part to crush this curve.

While we must remain vigilant and continue to monitor the daily COVID-19 stats, it is clear that Staten Island has long surpassed the rest of the City in bolstering our health and safety resources.

I am looking forward to seeing us enter phase 2 on Monday, and firmly believe that we are ready to go even further.

Wishing you good health,

Andrew Lanza
NYS Senator