

Office of the District Attorney

County of Lebanon

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Pier Hess Graf
District Attorney

Daniel J. Wright
Chief County Detective

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Dear Citizens of Lebanon County,

Last Friday, I issued a press release which indicated *all* local businesses may reopen without fear of criminal consequences. The Office of the District Attorney will not pursue legal action against local business which operates within certain restrictions. The burdens on our local economy are great, and law enforcement will not add to them.

I strongly believe in an individual's liberty and freedom. As a citizen and resident of our County, you possess the right to decide whether to open your business or if you feel safely enough to patronize a business. My decision merely returned our citizens' rights to make those decisions.

Inherent limitations on my actions unfortunately exist. Today, Governor Wolf explained the State might penalize your business for opening prior to the Governor's approval with civil consequences. If you, or your business, are subject to State regulation or licensure, you are subject to the Governor's civil consequences. The State may revoke your license, close your business, and/or impose a civil fine. The State may also review your insurance coverage. Examples include the Liquor Control Board, the Department of Agriculture and cosmetology licenses. The State acts at the direction of your Governor and my Office cannot control his actions.

Our blanket refusal to criminalize a business' decision leaves the individual's choice – to open or not to open – solely up to the individual. As prosecutors, my responsibility is to do the right things, for the right reasons. We enforce laws passed by our legislature via the political process created by our forefathers, not by a Governor who hides behind political answers and thinly veiled threats. Despite how misguided and wrong I believe his actions to be, you must be aware of his potential punishments and make the best decision for your families.

The public also inquired about police authority should they choose to open their businesses. Local law enforcement stands behind this community; we exist to protect and serve. Our Office and Lebanon County's police departments are a united front. This includes the Pennsylvania State Police.

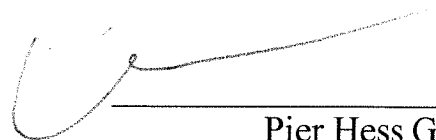
If a citizen complains about a business, law enforcement will respond if appropriate. Police may educate the public as to the requirements of Dr. Levine's April 15th Order – social distancing, personal protective equipment, and limitations of the number of people present. They will thereafter leave and call my Office if necessary. Even if a citation is filed within Lebanon County, my Office retains the authority to withdraw and eliminate prosecution. The Office of the District Attorney and the police county-wide support and will stand behind our local businesses.

I understand many of our citizens face a current financial crisis. You emailed, messaged on social media, and called our office. You expressed serious and tangible fears over bills and the ability to put food on the table. Many of you also expressed the same level of fear with respect to the virus and your personal well-being. We as a community need not choose between economic success and our physical health. The decision of my Office allows each of you to decide whether to open and whether to go in public. Make your decision, utilize the necessary precautions, and we will pull through *together* safely.

America exists, borne of hope and crafted to protect our individual liberties. Our founders decried tyranny and insisted the people and their elected body of government craft our laws. The decisions ahead are difficult; they require analysis of the necessity of business against potential health risks and harsh civil penalties. The choice you ultimately make requires thoughtful and educated contemplation.

Your families, your businesses, and our community are all in our thoughts and prayers. Our Office and law enforcement wish you the best in these difficult times and we are here to support you.

Respectfully,



Pier Hess Graf
District Attorney