

# **O'Scanlon's Framework For Health, Liberty and Prosperity in a COVID-19 Impacted New Jersey**

**By Senator Declan O'Scanlon**

Under the leadership of Governor Phil Murphy, New Jersey residents have responded remarkably well given the unprecedented and deadly invisible enemy we have faced. We have flattened the curve and reversed the trends of COVID-19. We have changed our behavior, likely forever. I credit the Governor with making some tough calls and sympathize with the difficulty of challenges he's faced, and will face going forward.

The job isn't done, but we've learned a lot. We're ready to move to the next phase of our public health and economic recovery. Governor Murphy frequently says that public health yields economic health. I'd say it goes both ways, economic health is public health as well. We're now entering a phase where hesitation on the economic front could prove to be as damaging as the disease. Our economic recovery, if we move quickly, creatively & safely will avoid the tremendous potential fiscal and health impacts that come with devastating recession, or worse.

**The O'Scanlon plan for the next steps in our recovery is as follows:**

**For State Government:**

**Do not attempt to micromanage the economic recovery!**

- It won't work. Micromanaging our economy and individual business operations will make the situation worse. The governor often brags of our diversity. A one size fits all approach will not work in our state.
- Empower our local and county governments to coordinate with each other and set the standards for doing business in their communities. Union County has different needs and conditions than does Monmouth County. We pay huge property taxes to support almost 600 local municipalities and 21 counties. If ever there was a time to reap the benefit of that almost micro-knowledge, it's now.
- Let local governments, with coordination amongst themselves and their County, make the call and set the standards, with guidance, on high school graduations, and other public celebrations

**Focus on doing what only State Government can do and do that well. Leave everything else up to locals!**

- Get the Unemployment Insurance system caught up and working. This is an area that has been brutal on all. Progress has accelerated, intensely focus until every last person is paid. Get prepared for the next emergency and stay prepared.
- Get caught up on COVID-19 testing and contact tracing. Implement the plan in cooperation with local governments and health departments. There are new, more convenient tests being approved every week. Because we are so behind on testing this can't be a prerequisite to our reopening. We could kill our economy waiting. We must ramp up testing and open at the same time.
- Support our long term care facilities in becoming safe places for our most vulnerable loved ones. Serious early mistakes caused unnecessary loss of life. We must investigate, understand what happened, hold people accountable and implement policies and procedures to avoid any recurrence.
- Start to reopen the healthcare system for elective surgeries
- Make sure our healthcare providers, first responders and their employers have the resources they need.

#### **For Residents:**

- As the governor says, "don't be a knucklehead."
- Where practical: avoid touching things others touch, wash your hands frequently, carry a few tissues to use to open doors & throw away after you use them. Don't litter.
- Stay 6 feet from others wherever possible, including on beaches, boardwalks, in parks and establishments. Where that fails to happen inadvertently, don't sweat it. These are stressful times for all of us. Cut slack, relax. Facial cues are impossible to read behind masks, let's assume everyone is smiling back there!
- Wear masks when indoors at public places where practical. Don't yell at people who don't.
- Gatherings: Be smart. This isn't the time for you to have 200 of your closest friends over! Keep gatherings to numbers small enough so that people aren't forced to be on top of each other. Clean surfaces - door handles, faucets, toilet flush handles etc. frequently. Don't call the police if your neighbors have a few folks over.

#### **For Local Governments and Businesses:**

- Encourage doors of stores & establishments to be propped open or install automatic door openers. When not possible - it's going to be 90 degrees soon - have regular & frequent surface & door handle cleaning regimen.

- Suggest that hand-sanitizer dispensers be installed where appropriate.
- Store workers, when open to public, should wear masks whenever practicable. It won't always be - and people can decide for themselves to avoid establishments that make them feel uncomfortable.
- Permit bars and restaurants, wherever possible, to expand their service area outdoors, tents and warming/cooling devices included. This is already up to locals. ABC should stay out of the way and resist urge to micro-manage. If locals approve, let it happen. Many of these establishments can't make a profit at 50% capacity. Let them expand outside where possible - or inside if they get creative - to get to a level that enables them to open, and still be safe.
- Encourage bars/restaurants/churches etc. to creatively spread out seating or install protection between booths. Encourage patrons to force this by avoiding restaurants that pack too many people inside.
- Restaurants etc.: Eliminate commonly touched surfaces: prop doors open; provide salt, pepper, ketchup in single use servings.
- Constant cleaning of surfaces people are forced to touch.
- Permit all beach facilities to open - including bathrooms and cabanas etc. Beach club owners are used to managing their members and keeping things organized and clean. Trust them to wisely up their game. Pools should be allowed to open - with efforts to avoid overcrowding as practicable. Tip: you can't get it from pool water!
- Outdoor and indoor bar areas should be allowed to open again, with recommendations of regular cleaning of touchable surfaces and distancing between parties. Leave all seating in place but ask patrons to leave two seats between parties and spread out if standing.

**GIVE GUIDANCE, AVOID MANDATES! DON'T MICRO-MANAGE!!**

**Things government shouldn't be trying to micro-manage & bad ideas that might seem outrageous but...you never know:**

- Parking - unless we're going to do a survey of available square feet of sand per available parking space, then calculate the average beach blanket space per car/family, then, finally, calculate how many family beach plots are potentially available on each particular beach (think Wildwood vs. Monmouth Beach) WITH 6 feet of separation...don't limit parking to some random, silly number! Now you understand the ludicrousness of a message that towns should "limit parking to 50%" ANYWHERE..parks, beaches etc. Sheer insanity.
- Beach Badge Limitation - see "Parking" above.

- Pools - the CDC website makes clear you can't catch this from pool water. Don't try to impose micro-management of kids/people in pools. Leave this up to beach club owners and their members and trust them to be responsible.
- Restaurant capacity. Their business model can't survive on a blanket 50% mandate. Give guidance - see above - to business owners and local officials and let them get creative.
- Outdoor mask mandates. There's little evidence that people are transmitting Covid-19 in outdoor open spaces - like parks and beaches.
- Don't do things like this: Proximity Monitoring App - shocks you when closer than 8 feet to anyone else. 6 feet's the goal, but need to account for closing speed. Trust me, someone will come up with something like this.
- Charter Boats/social distancing/beach police: We don't need police helicopters/drones hovering over each boat/beach/park or police officers tasked with wrestling people to the ground for coming within 4 feet of others or not wearing masks.

**DON'T MICRO-MANAGE!! DON'T BE A KNUCKLEHEAD!!**

We've done remarkably well during the first phase of this crisis. Now is the time to pivot from shutdown mode and to responsibly unleash the creativity of our local leaders in business and government.