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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** May 12, 2020

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## **Pike County Officials Build Alliances to Address the Reopening of Local Businesses**

**PIKE COUNTY, PA** – The Pike County Commissioners are committed to a balanced, and responsible reopening of businesses in Pike County as they safely navigate the COVID-19 crisis. The Commissioners recognize and commend Pike County residents and business owners for the sacrifices they have made over the past two months to help flatten the curve of the COVID-19 virus.

While Pike officials will continue to follow the law, with the understanding that the authority to supersede the Governor’s public health restrictions and reopen local businesses does not lay at the county level, the Commissioners are keenly aware of the economic hardships the Governor’s restrictions bring to local businesses.

“We are disappointed in the lack of guidance from Governor Wolf regarding a path to recovery, yet we recognize the difficult job he faces during this unprecedented crisis,” says Commissioner Ronald Schmalzle.

Pike County officials are working together with leaders in neighboring counties of Carbon, Monroe, and Wayne; municipal officials; regional health care facilities; and organizations such as the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau (PMVB), and regional Chambers of Commerce to expediently develop a proposal to Governor Wolf outlining a clear and safe reopening plan.

“It would be irresponsible to direct our businesses to go against the Governor’s order and to risk even further adverse economic consequences during this very challenging time, but we believe the Pocono Mountains region should be moved to the Yellow Phase of the state’s reopening process,” says Commissioner Steve Guccini.

In his May 11th press conference, Governor Wolf clearly outlined repercussions to both counties and local businesses that choose to operate outside of the state’s reopening process. Non-adhering local businesses could jeopardize their state licensing and liability

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insurance, while county government could lose millions of dollars in discretionary funding that flows through to help provide a diverse assortment of much-needed local services.

The Pike County Commissioners are hopeful that local COVID-19 statistics – which have not overwhelmed our health care facilities – in combination with a strong and balanced alliance of community leaders, businesses interests, and public health officials will present a reasoned, united front that will be appropriately recognized at the state level for its responsible approach to reopening.

In addition to this collaborative approach, the Pike County Commissioners are actively pursuing funding and programs that can assist local businesses and non-profits in reopening by providing sanitation products and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) necessary to ensure the safety of employees, patrons and visitors. Additional testing capacity and contact tracing will also be implemented.

The Commissioners have also directed the Economic Development Authority (EDA) to compile resources for local businesses that provide reopening guidance on safety measures and standard operating procedures from experts such as the Center for Disease Control, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, and industry-specific organizations such as the PMVB, American Camping Association, National Restaurant Association, and others that relate to retail stores, salons, personal care, and other industries. These resources will be available on the county and EDA websites.

“Now more than ever it is the time to lead our business community toward a responsible path to reopening, first into the Yellow Phase and ultimately to Green. And we want to ensure that the proper public health and safety measures are in place to prevent an increase or resurgence in COVID-19 cases,” says Commissioner Chairman Matthew Osterberg.