



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo and Buttenschon call on governor to reopen gyms and fitness centers

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New York State Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon (D-Utica/Rome) and State Sen. Joseph Griffo (R-I-C-Rome) announced today that they have recently sent a letter to Gov. Andrew Cuomo urging him to release guidance and a timeline for the reopening of gyms and fitness centers around New York. Although every region in New York has now entered Phase 4 of the reopening plan, which includes higher education, low-risk indoor and outdoor entertainment, media production and sports competitions with no fans, no guidance has been given as to when gyms will reopen.

While detailed information relating to the reopening of nonessential businesses included in Phase 4 is available at forward.ny.gov/phase-four-industries, gyms were

not included in the list of industries that were allowed to reopen. Assemblywoman Buttenschon and Sen. Griffo's letter points out that several gym owners have already begun preparing plans for reopening, including restrictive occupancy limits, face-covering requirements and distancing and sanitation measures, based on guidance already provided by the state to other industries.

"So far, New York State's reopening plan - which has aimed to keep residents safe while also beginning the process of rebuilding the economy - has been successful and effective, but gym owners, their employees, and their members have been left behind," Assemblywoman Buttenschon said. "An undue financial burden has been placed on these New Yorkers, who have not been provided with a timeline detailing when the industry will be allowed to reopen. Our small, local gym and fitness center owners deserve proper guidance as soon as possible so they can begin recovering from this crisis, along with their employees who have been without a reliable income. I have heard from many residents who rely on gyms and their committed employees to help maintain their personal health and fitness. I am hopeful the Governor will consider the ideas put forward by the industry and move forward in this process."

"Local gyms and fitness centers, like so many other small businesses throughout the state, are suffering and facing significant economic challenges as a result of COVID-19," Sen. Griffo said. "Many of these businesses have developed workable reopening plans that they believe will best protect the health and well-being of employees and members. I am hopeful that the governor will consider these and other proposals and release guidance for gyms and fitness centers that will allow them to reopen safely and soon."

The full text of the letter is below:

July 28, 2020

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo

Governor, State of New York

Executive Chamber, State Capitol

Albany, NY 12248

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We are writing to you regarding the continued concerns we hear from both owners and members of the Mohawk Valley's gyms and fitness centers that have yet to receive guidance or information on the timelines of their reopening. This lack of guidance hurts the entire fitness industry, but particularly hurts our small, locally-owned gyms and fitness centers.

New York Forward has been an effective method of developing and sharing information on the reopening our state's economy. We recognize that none of these reopening decisions are easy to make and that all must provide a balance between public safety and economic benefit.

We remain concerned that gyms and fitness centers were not included as part of the fourth phase of reopening. These business owners fear for their ability to survive and prosper due to significant financial and operational stress. On the other hand, constituents who make use of these facilities and who take their fitness classes are concerned about their ability to maintain their health while these facilities remain closed.

Many of the Mohawk Valley's gyms and fitness centers' owners have worked tirelessly to develop reopening and safety plans that they believe will keep themselves, their employees and their members safe. These plans include restrictive occupancy limits, face covering requirements, distancing and sanitation measures and other mitigation efforts. Many of these plans are based on guidance already provided by the Executive to those in similar industries that have reopened.

We understand that the decisions on reopening are difficult ones to make. We urge you to swiftly act to release guidance and a timeline for the reopening of gyms and fitness centers around New York.

Best Regards,