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Senate of Pennsylvania

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POLICY

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March 28, 2020

Secretary Dennis M. Davin
Department of Community and Economic Development
Commonwealth Keystone Building
400 North Street, 4th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0225

Dear Secretary Davin:

I understand that we are in an unprecedented time and that your staff is working extremely hard over long hours. I am trying to be sensitive to that and the fact that we are basically building a plane while we are flying it. However, my office is getting an increasing number of calls regarding the opaque process that the Department of Community and Economic Development has established for granting waivers for business to remain open during this pandemic.

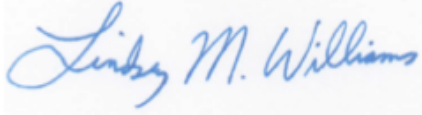
In order for these painful mitigation tactics to be successful in flattening the curve, we need to be consistent. Only the truly life-sustaining businesses should remain open and they must operate under strict safety guidelines that maintain social distancing and protect workers' health.

Yesterday's article in the *PA Post* revealing that the Dan Smith Candy Company, owned by Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati, and Governor Wolf's former business had been granted waivers undermines public confidence in an already controversial process. In an uncertain time like this, we need to be more transparent than ever. The small businesses that are making tremendous sacrifices to do the right thing have to know that the rules they are following are the same for everyone. The process for obtaining a waiver should be clearly defined and uniformly applied.

As minority chair of Community Economic and Recreational Development, I request that you make the waiver criteria for a "life sustaining" business publicly available. I also request that the list of businesses that received a waiver and the reason that they received the waiver be publicly available.

I again reiterate that I know we dealing with an unprecedented crisis. But this crisis has dealt us the privilege of Pennsylvanians looking to our state government for guidance, clarity, and safety. We must heed this trust and offer the most transparent and equitable government processes possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lindsey M. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a light blue background behind the text.

Lindsey M. Williams
State Senator
38th Senatorial District

Cc: Senator Jay Costa, Democratic Majority Leader