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***Message from Terry Espy, President of Downtown Business Alliance***

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Downtown Business Owners,

We realize that every one of our Downtown Business Owners and staff will be affected by this challenging time. The DBA board has been working behind the scenes very intensely over the last few days to identify strategies to help. Conference calls with board members, ABC/ALE officials, City of Wilmington officials, New Hanover County Health Department, Sen Harper Peterson, Susi Hamilton, WDI team...we are all working together to make the best of this challenging time.

Many restaurant owners have reached out with concerns regarding the potential of forced closings. Most had stocked heavily for the St. Patty's Day weekend and with the cancellation of the parade and the festival it was a significant problem. Numerous restaurant owners confirmed that they did **NOT** wish to shut down completely, and that they would move forward doing pickups and deliveries. We felt it was best to expedite a support system that could best serve them. We coordinated with the City of Wilmington Parking Manager, Chance Dunbar, in successfully gaining permission from the City to bag 2 meters at the end of each block and identify all Loading Zones as "Pick Up and Delivery Zones".

We also confirmed that restaurant/bottle shops may sell unopened wine and beer via delivery or pick-up service. One woman told me that a week from now when she has been home schooling her three children that she is going to need her wine!



We put “feet on the street” today to determine which restaurants would like to remain open for deliveries and pick-up while distributing 40 bright green signs stating “Open for Delivery & Pick-Up ONLY” to be placed in the window of participating restaurants. We are currently consolidating the initial list of participants along with their web page, Facebook link, and phone number to place orders. This list will be shared with numerous entities to help promote these businesses.

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On another note, several business owners have expressed concern regarding Unemployment Benefits. Not only expediting the process, but how it will affect the business owners next year when their Unemployment Rates for the year are adjusted. Normally, when a business shows an increase in Unemployment Claims their

rate is increased the following year. We brought this to the attention of Senator Harper Peterson who immediately brought to Gov. Coopers attention. We are pleased to see such a fast response by both and have been informed that more clarification is upcoming.

Sen. Peterson issued the following post today:

# **HARPER PETERSON**

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for NC STATE SENATE

## **Governor Cooper Issued an Executive Order Increasing Access to Unemployment Benefits**

North Carolina's current unemployment benefits are not enough to keep our working families afloat, but Governor Cooper's expansion of benefits is a start and I will continue to fight to ensure small business owners and employees are taken care of as quickly as possible. The executive order makes five important changes to unemployment benefits:

***It removes the one-week waiting period to apply for unemployment payment for those workers who lose their jobs;***

***It removes the requirement that a person must be actively looking for another job during this time when many potential employers are closed and social distancing guidelines are in effect.***

***It allows employees who lose their jobs or, in certain cases have their hours reduced due to Covid-19 to apply for unemployment benefits.***

***It directs that employers will not be held responsible for benefits paid as a direct result of these COVID-19 claims.***

***It waives the requirement that people must apply for benefits in person; workers can apply for benefits online or by phone.***

As the situation regarding COVID-19 continues to change in our state, I will do my best to keep you informed. For the latest updates, please refer to the NC Department of Health and Human Services [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). Additionally, if you have questions regarding your health or potential infection, please contact the NHC Emergency Operations Center (EOC) "HOTLINE" at 910-798-6800, available M-F from 7:30am-6:00pm.

Harper Peterson  
Senator, NC Senate District 9

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We will continue to keep you informed of issues affecting the Downtown Businesses. We welcome your suggestions as well. Again, we ask that each of you take seriously the precautions that have been published and broadcasted. We are a strong, stubborn, yet loyal group here Downtown Wilmington and we will continue to support one another to help get past this challenging time!!

Terry Espy  
DBA President

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**New Hanover County Health Department**  
[Community Guidance: Coronavirus / COVID-19](#)

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