



NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE

Howard County Board of Commissioners  
Howard County Admin. Center  
220 N. Main St.  
Kokomo, IN 46901

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**Commissioners extend travel advisory; permit additional curbside/delivery services for retail businesses.**

**KOKOMO, IN** – The countywide advisory for Howard County, set to expire on Sunday, will be extended, and some allowances will be made for retail businesses with restrictions.

The Howard County Board of Commissioners announced at a press conference today that the Orange Travel Advisory will be maintained through 11:59 p.m., Monday, May 4. They continue to recommend limited travel, including to and from essential work, medical care or to obtain medication, for emergency situations, for food or groceries, and other items.

Howard County Government public will be canceled until May 4, 2020.

In addition, non-essential retail businesses may open, but strictly for online or call-in services, with delivery or curbside pickup only. It is expected these businesses will not allow patrons in their stores and will follow CDC guidelines for limited employees, and follow procedures related to social distancing and proper sanitizing due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Plus, faith institutions may conduct drive-in or parking lot services with specific criteria. Only the minimum number of personnel should be used to deliver the service, and attendees must remain in their vehicles at all times. Other guidelines are outlined in the ordinance.

“As we monitor the excellent progress being made in Howard County with COVID-19, the Commissioners believe these next steps are appropriate and are in alignment with Gov. Eric Holcomb’s state order as well,” said Commissioner Paul Wyman. “Medical experts throughout the county agree we are in a position to allow certain businesses the opportunity for curbside pickup/delivery and, with proper protocols, faith institutions are safe to conduct the parking lot worship services.”

Dr. Don Zent, Howard County Health Officer, notes that most citizens have been diligent in their efforts to flatten the coronavirus curve, and that moving forward in this way makes sense.

“Our plan to flatten the curve is working. Our local hospitals continue to have capacity, as we have made great strides in slowing the spread of the virus in Howard County,” Zent said. “This puts us in a position to enable the next small step in allowing additional low-risk services to open in our community. Moving forward, it is important for residents to follow the stay-at-home order as often as possible and practice social distancing and other CDC recommendations. Together, we will overcome the health risks to our citizens.”

Dr. Gatewood supports extending Orange Travel Advisory and taking steps to provide additional low risk services in our community.

"The residents of Howard County have shown an incredible commitment to one another over this past month in making sacrifices for the health and well-being of one another. Due to this dedication, we are having success in flattening the curve and the COVID-19 "surge" is more manageable with each passing day." said Dr. Timothy Gatewood. "Therefore, as a community we are now in a position to begin the gradual lessening of some low risk business related restrictions. When in public please wear masks and maintain 6 feet of separation and practice consistent hand washing to ensure our continued success."

The Commissioners, along with the County Council, also announced they will replicate the KokomoStrongER, a citywide forgivable loan program, and offer small businesses in Howard County, outside the city limits of Kokomo, the opportunity to participate in a similar initiative.

The Howard County Emergency Relief Forgivable Loan Program is designed to assist small businesses affected from the economic shutdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Like the City of Kokomo, Howard County will offer a streamlined application process and quick approval process so that businesses can receive the necessary help they deserve.

“Small business is vital to our community and we are proud to come alongside the City of Kokomo and offer a very similar program to small businesses throughout the rest of the county. This will ensure small business from county-line-to-county-line are given the help they deserve,” Wyman said.

“The County Council is proud to partner in this important project to ensure that our small businesses come out on the other side of this pandemic as strong or stronger. Our community is blessed to have so many small businesses that provide employment opportunities for our families and sponsorships for our local sports and charities.” said Jim Papacek, president of the Howard County Council.