A Message from Rochester Chamber CEO Bob Duffy

March 19, 2020

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has issued an executive order mandating all businesses and not-for-profit entities in the state to reduce their in-person workforce at any location by 75%, with some exceptions for operations deemed essential, in order to cope with the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic. This mandate goes into effect at 8 p.m. Friday, March 20. Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce supports this effort and has made arrangements to continue providing seamless customer service 100% remotely. We encourage the business community to employ remote work to the greatest extent possible.

**Empire State Development** will issue guidance as to which organizations are deemed exempt from the 75% mandate. Those now considered essential include:

- Essential health care operations including research and laboratory services
- Essential infrastructure including utilities, telecommunication, airports, and transportation infrastructure
- Essential manufacturing, including food processing and pharmaceuticals
- Essential retail including grocery stores and pharmacies
- Essential services including trash collection, mail, and shipping services
- News media
- Banks and related financial institutions; providers of necessities to economically disadvantaged populations
- Construction
- Vendors of essential services necessary to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operations of residences or other essential businesses
Vendors that provide essential services or products, including logistics and technology support, childcare and services needed to ensure the continuing operation of government agencies and provide for the health, safety, and welfare of the public

Businesses may request an opinion from Empire State Development, which shall review and grant such request, should it determine that it is in the best interest of the state to have the workforce continue at full capacity in order to properly respond to this disaster.

Rochester Chamber has posted a "Coronavirus/COVID-19 Resources for Business" page on our website with advice on working remotely as well as a wide range of government and other information that businesses can use to make informed decisions about their continuity.

Other COVID-19 developments critical to employers include:

**Federal Paid Sick Leave and Paid Family and Medical Leave Requirements Effective April 2**
President Donald Trump signed an emergency bill to expand family and medical leave as well as guarantee paid sick leave for certain U.S. workers, including those employed by private entities or individuals who employ fewer than 500 employees, according to various media reports. The bill takes effect April 2, 2020, and it will sunset on Dec. 31, 2020.

**New York State COVID-19 Paid Sick Leave and Paid Family Leave Requirements Effective Immediately**
For employees subject to mandatory or precautionary quarantine or isolation related to the pandemic, or for school or day care closings, employers must provide “Coronavirus-specific” paid sick leave to employees. It also expands the state’s disability and paid family leave benefits to cover certain Coronavirus-related leave.

**New York State Unemployment Insurance Shared Work Program**
Shared work allows employers to keep trained staff and avoid layoffs during a time of reduced work. Employees can receive partial Unemployment Insurance
benefits while working reduced hours. Full-time, part-time and seasonal employees are eligible.

Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce is also supporting businesses and not-for-profits in need of assistance through matchmaking portals:

Amid this evolving public health crisis, it is critical to have the ability to recognize both needs and available resources across our respective communities. In partnership with Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce, Upstate Venture Connect, and Roc Growth, Continual Care Solutions has launched imPowr Community Exchange. This portal serves as a repository to collect and share the needs of social agencies and local businesses, and resources available from the larger community, including business, government, academia, the arts, and other sectors. The matchmaking portal gathers opportunities to help in categories such as food, clothing, supplies, financial donations, volunteers, and more. There is no cost associated with these services. It is our way to collaboratively help organizations manage the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic through shared technology.

The United Way of Greater Rochester Volunteer United portal offers volunteer and in-kind donation opportunities to support local not-for-profits working to serve the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. United Way has also partnered with the Rochester Area Community Foundation to create a COVID-19 Community Crisis Fund.

Pulling together, we will get through this crisis. Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce staff is working to support business in any way that we can. If you have questions or need guidance, please send us an email.

Stay healthy.

Bob Duffy
Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce
President and CEO