

INDIANA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

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April 22, 2020

**The Honorable Eric J. Holcomb
Governor of Indiana
200 W Washington St, Rm 206
Indianapolis, IN 46204**

Dear Governor Holcomb,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit the views of Indiana's real estate industry regarding reopening Indiana's economy. Simply put, we believe that the only way to return our economy to normalcy is by defeating the virus. The only way to defeat the virus is take the steps suggested by the pertinent data. While these steps are inherently unclear and imperfect, only your administration possesses the breadth and depth of knowledge required to make these judgements for Hoosiers and those who do business in Indiana. We continue to place our trust in your judgement as you balance the many considerations before you.

The real estate needs of Hoosiers have not stopped during the pandemic. Our members are safely serving Hoosiers in a variety of circumstances. Some had transactions in progress, some have leases expiring, some need short-term housing to quarantine away from their families, some are facing economic hardship, and some are moving to take new jobs. While the needs and circumstances differ, the constant is that home means more now than ever.

The real estate industry entered this stay-at-home period well-positioned. That's because most aspects of today's real estate transactions can be completed online – a shift that happened years ago. Those aspects that do require face-to-face meetings require minimal numbers of people who can easily adhere to social distancing and follow other safety measures. Most property searches begin online. Our association has offered members a suite of virtual tools for nearly a decade now. The tools include transactional forms and contracts via an online platform, an electronic signature product, and a mobile forms app.

The pandemic has accelerated these trends. A survey of our firms shows they have rapidly implemented or expanded the use of virtual open houses, tours, and staging, 3D property scans, secure digital document sharing and signing, curbside closings, and "live" tours through tools such as Facebook Live, FaceTime, and Skype. In-person open houses have ceased. Parties to transactions are provided disclosure documents to self-identify symptoms, travel, or exposure, as well as consent to any in-person meetings. Face-to-face meetings are limited in size, and include the requisite social distancing, protective equipment, and sanitizing of workspaces. Your administration's expediting of the remote online notary statute provides an important new tool.



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Our firms have also significantly altered internal operating procedures for the protection of their employees. Most have shut their offices completely, allowing administrative employees in only as necessary to maintain basic operations. Sales agents in most instances are required to work remotely. Other measures they report are virtual staff meetings, self-quarantine post travel, additional cleaning measures, and provision of hand sanitizers, wipes, and masks.

Looking forward, these measures will be continued as required by executive order and generally accepted CDC and local health guidelines. It would be our hope that a satisfactory testing and contact tracing mechanism be in place prior to a general reopening. Our firms have indicated a willingness to participate in such programs as they become available. Having come this far, we feel the risk of opening too soon outweighs the risk of opening too late, negating our hard-earned progress.

Our industry is committed to providing essential real estate services to Hoosiers with housing needs. We take equally seriously our responsibility to do so while strictly adhering to health and safety measures advised by state leaders. We look forward to working with your administration on these critical issues in coming months.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Karl Berron'.

Karl Berron, CAE
Chief Executive Officer

