

2020 SPECIAL SESSION I

INTRODUCED

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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5001

Offered August 18, 2020

Prefiled August 17, 2020

Urging the Governor to rescind executive orders declaring a public health emergency and imposing restrictions on citizens, businesses, and schools in the Commonwealth due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Patron—Peake

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, a novel coronavirus-caused disease, known as COVID-19, entered the United States in late January 2020 and has spread through the states, with the first case in Virginia being confirmed on March 7, 2020; and

WHEREAS, on March 12, 2020, Governor Ralph Northam declared a public health emergency in the Commonwealth in response to the continued spread of COVID-19, directing state and local governments to render appropriate assistance to prepare for this event, to alleviate any conditions resulting from the situation, and to implement recovery and mitigation operations and activities so as to return impacted areas to pre-event conditions as much as possible; and

WHEREAS, since the issuance of the order, the Governor and his administration have issued executive orders intended to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, directly resulting in severe disruption to the Commonwealth and its political subdivisions and that have and continue to produce critical and in some cases irreversible short-term and long-term negative economic consequences; and

WHEREAS, on March 23, 2020, the Governor issued Executive Order Number 53 placing restrictions on restaurants, recreational facilities, entertainment venues, gatherings, and non-essential retail businesses and ordering the closure of K-12 schools in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, since the Governor's March 23, 2020, order restricting business operations, those business operations in the Commonwealth that were forced to limit operations or close have experienced significant losses, made massive layoffs, and suffered catastrophic economic injury and other unsustainable damage and as a direct result some will never financially recover or reopen; and

WHEREAS, since the Governor's March 23, 2020, order restricting business operations, more than one million Virginians have filed initial claims for unemployment benefits, nearly a quarter of the workforce, exceeding the unemployment experienced during the Great Recession and rivaling that of the Great Depression, with over 350,000 Virginians continuing to draw benefits as of August 1, 2020; and

WHEREAS, since his executive order on March 23, 2020, the Governor has issued multiple executive orders and orders of public health emergency that have further affected the operations of businesses throughout the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, based on data provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the most immediate and direct threat posed by COVID-19 is to older individuals and those individuals with preexisting health conditions; and

WHEREAS, the Governor should continue to urge such vulnerable individuals to take appropriate precautions to avoid the COVID-19 virus while permitting businesses and schools to be fully open while also taking recommended precautions as appropriate in those settings; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Governor be urged to rescind executive orders declaring a public health emergency and imposing restrictions on citizens, businesses, and schools in the Commonwealth due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Office of the Governor, requesting that the Governor further disseminate copies of this resolution to the appropriate agencies of the Commonwealth so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter.

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