May 22, 2020

The Honorable Governor [ ]

Address (Find your governors’ [address here](https://www.nga.org/governors/addresses/))

Dear Governor [ ],

We write as business owners eager to reopen in a safe and sanitary fashion. We are writing to first and foremost applaud your efforts and the reopening plan to protect residents’ safety and health. However, with all due respect, we believe that health clubs are in the incorrect category within the Phased reopening plan.

In [State name], more than [number of businesses] closed on [date or month clubs closed]. These businesses serve [number of gym users in state] consumers in ordinary circumstances. Many of these patrons are eager to return to their healthy routines. For many of these [number] patrons, health clubs are more than a site of recreation or amusement. While many enjoy the challenge and competitiveness of exercise, health clubs are, in fact, an integral part of preventative health care.

The fitness industry plays an essential, critical role in the promotion and maintenance of mental, physical, and social health and wellbeing. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), physical activity and other lifestyle changes can prevent five of the top ten causes of death in the U.S. (before COVID-19). Evidence shows that physically active lifestyles can improve immune system health and [diminish the risk of contracting some communicable diseases](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fimmu.2018.00648/full?utm_campaign=Health%20Benefits%20of%20Exercise%20Report&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=84862928&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--GNj3Rludtsg47KTCRr7HgZhwY9TuH5R8u2EIg3AIzZfpXIAnClKim8Tqv4GJdzaEKGXkO7JnEjDtWC0HiOxolyjzawA&_hsmi=84862928), including upper respiratory tract infections. Health and fitness clubs, through the promotion of mental and physical health, are an integral part of the solution to returning citizens to a state of good health.

During this lockdown, physical activity levels have [declined sharply,](https://www.bworldonline.com/data-from-fitbit-show-global-physical-activity-slowdown-due-to-coronavirus/) which is particularly alarming given that obesity-related conditions [seem to increase the risks associated with](https://www.worldobesity.org/news/statement-coronavirus-covid-19-obesity) COVID-19. In addition to the metabolic and immune system health benefits of physical activity, it has extensive mental health benefits. This is critical as many citizens are experiencing sadness or loneliness. [Studies show](https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/exercise-is-an-all-natural-treatment-to-fight-depression) that exercise can help prevent depression, and can be [an effective treatment](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3674785/) comparable to pharmacotherapy or psychotherapy. Exercise also has [numerous](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25330437) [benefits](https://www.omicsonline.org/open-access/beta-endorphin-and-alcohol-urge-responses-in-alcoholic-patients-following-an-acute-bout-of-exercise-2155-6105-5-194.php?aid=31066) to people with substance use disorders, who are particularly suffering during a pandemic that addiction experts have called “a national relapse trigger.”

**For these reasons, we see our industry as a key part of the preventative healthcare sector and should receive this classification.** The above benefits to consumers of using health clubs are not comparable to the benefits from other businesses classed as “Arts and Entertainment.” Restaurants and nail salons, included in Phase 2, offer none of the health or mental welfare benefits that fitness clubs do.

As an industry, we want to get back as soon as possible and provide a safe and supportive place for the members of our communities to exercise. We are ready, willing, and able to implement safety and sanitation procedures to ensure our members’ health and safety. Many clubs have already created extensive safety protocols and requirements to ensure the safety of our patrons when we are allowed to re-open.

We believe health clubs are integral to returning and maintaining the health of residents in the state. As sites of preventative health interventions, we are not merely places of entertainment and recreation. We are committed to putting our staff and members’ safety first as we reopen our facilities, and are willing to comply with the restrictions your office deems necessary to allow patrons to access this critical health service.

Sincerely,

[Club Owner name,

Club name,

Location]