

## One Bermuda Alliance

Covid-19 March 28, 2021 Press Release

The One Bermuda Alliance would like to offer their thanks and recognition for all the work that has been done over the past year, and in the future, by all of our essential workers. Contact tracers, healthcare workers, grocery store workers, police, regiment, teachers and other essential workers have worked tirelessly to help support Bermuda through the pandemic and their work has not gone unrecognized by the OBA.

As a country we must all do our part to protect people from this current wave of the pandemic. As such, we are calling on all Bermudians to do our part while we continue to live with the COVID-19 pandemic

While doing your grocery shopping, please ensure, that unless there are circumstances beyond your control (i.e., childcare) only one person from your household goes to the grocery store. Make sure that you assign one person as the one to do the shopping for the household. Use online ordering services where possible. Try to shop at off-peak hours, and to be prepared to stand in line outdoors during these times.

At a time when our hospitality industry is hurting, we encourage people to continue to support our restaurant industry with take-out and outdoor dining.

Help protect our most vulnerable population by calling people who are at risk or who are elderly to see if they need you to pick anything up and drop it at their doorstep.

We encourage people to maintain their small household bubbles, to keep to the guidelines issued by government, to wear a mask that fits over your nose and mouth, to wash your hands, to stay at home if you are unwell and to get vaccinated.

Whilst we support the government these measures, we also are asking for the following to be enacted:

Firstly, in order to overcome vaccine hesitancy, we are asking our government to offer incentives to those who are vaccinated. The CDC guidelines indicate that if people are vaccinated they can gather in small numbers (while still wearing masks) thus reducing the isolation during COVID. We ask that people who are vaccinated be allowed to meet with other vaccinated people (up to the maximum group size numbers) thus encouraging more people to become vaccinated. We cannot paint everyone with the same brush as the number of people who are fully vaccinated increases.

We must thank the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the UK government for sending us over 50,000 vaccines to date, with more on the way and we must ensure that those who are medically able to be vaccinated are encouraged to do so. With the announcement by the Premier that vaccination as a requirement to enter Bermuda will be implemented in the coming months, we must ensure that all Bermudians continue to have the opportunity and incentives to get vaccinated.

Secondly, owing to the uncertainty of this time, we call on government to offer clarity regarding the unemployment benefit and to ensure that payments are made accurately and swiftly to individuals that are applying for it. And for the companies we have similar concerns as they are also receiving economic support from the Economic Development Corporation. Many companies are struggling

from the impact the pandemic had through 2020 and urgently need help to continue to stay afloat. We are also calling on the government to freeze all government mandated increases (fees, taxes, mandated premiums or government regulated expenses) while continuing to examine government cost savings measures.

Thirdly, we call on our government to be open and transparent and to offer a plan B for families and employers should schools not be able to reopen on April 12th as planned. The education of our children is very important to us as a country and we need to ensure that, given how much school time has been lost already this year, we do not waste more time and have an alternative plan ready to go. We hope that schools can reopen safely, however, we urge our government to outline what will happen if they are unable to do so, allowing parents, teachers, schools and businesses to use the two-week school break to plan and implement the changes needed.

Finally, we call for more information about the regulations that the PLP government passed in the House of Assembly on Friday for those who are breaking the guidelines. What training will be offered to those individuals who will be able to issue tickets, whether there will be fixed fines for offenses, and whether these fines will actually work to help decrease non-compliance with guidelines. Will fining individuals help stop the spread or just make it harder on people who are already struggling? And if this is implemented, considering our government's record of collection of outstanding warrants and fines, we ask what plan is being put in place for the swift collection of the fines and penalties.

At this time, we call upon all Bermudians to work together as we always have done in the past during moments of crisis. We must act no differently in this crisis than we do during a storm. We must weather this storm together, following the guidelines and best practices set forth by the World Health Organization and the CDC to ensure the health and safety of our entire country.

Thank you, and please stay safe.