

Defendant Desautels by sheriff or by an officer of the Newport Police Department this afternoon.

In support of this motion, the State submits the following Memorandum of Law and attached Affirmation of State Epidemiologist Patsy Kelso, Affidavit of Newport Police Officers Tanner Jacobs, and other supporting documents.

MEMORANDUM OF LAW

Background

As of the morning of February 19, 2021, 14,251 Vermonters have fallen ill from COVID-19, and 193 Vermonters have died of it. Kelso Aff. ¶ 40.

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads quickly and easily. It also often spreads undetectably, as people with no symptoms may still transmit the virus. Kelso Aff. ¶ 10. “Community transmission” is when a communicable disease spreads within a community and some people are unsure about how or where they became infected. Vermont has been experiencing community transmission at least since March 19, 2020. *Id.* ¶ 27.

COVID-19 can cause serious illness and death. Kelso Aff. ¶ 11. Older people and those with underlying medical problems are more likely to develop serious illness or to die, but anyone infected with COVID-19 is at some risk of developing serious illness and dying. *Id.* Patients who are seriously ill with COVID-19 may require hospitalization, including admission to an intensive care unit (ICU). *Id.* ¶ 12. It would pose a tremendous risk to public health if many people fell ill with COVID-19 at the same time and overwhelmed the capacity of the State’s health

care resources to care for them—for example, if the State experienced shortages in inpatient hospital beds, intensive care unit beds, ventilators, and personal protective equipment. *Id.* ¶ 15. If health care resources are overwhelmed, more people will die for lack of necessary care. *See id.* ¶ 15, 33.

Executive Order 01-20

To prevent these needless deaths, Vermont has attempted to slow the spread of COVID-19 throughout the State. The Governor has issued Executive Order 01-20,¹ declaring a state of emergency and implementing measures to slow the spread of COVID-19, and has amended that order several times with various addenda and directives. Among other requirements for the protection of public health, the Order and addenda now generally require that people wear masks or cloth facial coverings when in public spaces.

Mask Requirement for Employees

On April 17, 2020, Governor Scott issued Addendum 10 to his original Executive Order 01-20. Addendum 10 required that “[e]mployees must wear non-medical cloth face coverings (bandanna, scarf, or nonmedical mask, etc.) over their nose and mouth when in the presence of others. In the case of retail cashiers, a translucent shield or ‘sneeze guard’ is acceptable in lieu of a mask.”²

¹ <https://governor.vermont.gov/sites/scott/files/documents/EO%2001-20%20Declaration%20of%20State%20of%20Emergency%20in%20Response%20to%20COVID-19%20and%20National%20Guard%20Call-Out.pdf>.

² https://governor.vermont.gov/sites/scott/files/documents/ADDENDUM%2010%20TO%20EXECUTIVE%20ORDER%2001-20_0.pdf.

On June 15, 2020, Governor Scott issued Amended and Restated Executive Order 01-20, which superseded the original Executive Order 01-20.³ Addendum 2 to Amended and Restated Executive Order 01-20, which is currently effective, states that “[f]or the sake of clarity, the requirements for masks or facial coverings or permitted alternatives in specific circumstances shall continue to apply as set forth in the following guidance: Phased Restart Work Safe Guidance issued by the Secretary of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) permitting limited alternatives to face masks in limited workplace settings.”⁴

ACCD’s Phased Restart Work Safe Guidance requires: “Employees must wear face coverings over their nose and mouth when in the presence of others. In the case of retail cashiers, a translucent shield or ‘sneeze guard’ is acceptable in lieu of a mask if the employee works alone and does not interact with customers outside the work station.” Lindsay Kurrle, *New Work Safe Additions to the Be Smart, Stay Safe Order*, Agency of Commerce and Community Development (Feb. 12, 2021), <https://accd.vermont.gov/news/update-new-work-safe-additions-be-smart-stay-safe-order>.

ACCD further clarifies the mask requirement in a FAQ document: “Do I need to require my employees to wear masks? Yes.” Agency of Commerce and Community Development, *Pandemic State of Emergency FAQs for Business*,

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<https://governor.vermont.gov/sites/scott/files/documents/Amended%20and%20Restated%20Executive%20Order%20No.%2001-20.pdf>.

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<https://governor.vermont.gov/sites/scott/files/documents/ADDENDUM%202%20TO%20AMENDED%20AND%20RESTATED%20EXECUTIVE%20ORDER%20NO.%2001-20.pdf>.

<https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/business/faqs>. It notes that “[i]n rare circumstances where an employee is physically unable to wear a mask, the employer should require a note from a doctor explaining their need for an accommodation, and the employer should implement other measures to protect the workplace and the employee.” *Id.* Furthermore, it clarifies that “In the presence of others’ means if there are other people around the employee, or if the employee is likely to interact with others, such as people coming into an office, interacting with customers, or when working outdoors in a public place.” *Id.*

Defendants’ Business Operation and Failure to Wear Masks

Defendants operate a retail mailbox, shipping, and copying store at 137 Main Street, Newport, Vermont, 05855. Defendants have refused to require their employees to wear masks while working in the presence of others, and Defendant Desautels has personally repeatedly refused to wear a mask while working in the presence of others.

In November 2020, the Newport Police Department received reports that Defendants were not complying with the Governor’s mask requirement for employees. Officer Nicholas Rivers conducted a compliance check on November 9. *See Attachment B.* The officer spoke to Defendant Desautels, who was not wearing a mask and said that there was “no way” he would wear a mask and “he would shut down before doing so.” *Id.* The officer relayed that information to the Attorney General’s Office.

The Attorney General's Office sent Defendants a letter informing them of the Governor's mask requirement for employees on November 10, 2020 and advising them to immediately follow all safety and health protocols. *See Attachment D.*

On February 1, 2021, the Newport Police Department received another report that Defendants were violating the mask requirement. *See Attachment B.* Officer Jacobs performed a compliance check and observed one employee wearing a mask but Defendant Desautels not wearing a mask. *Id.*

On February 11, 2021, in response to reports of noncompliance, the Attorney General's Office asked the Newport Police Department to speak to Defendants about the Governor's Mask requirement. *See Attachment B.* Officer Carmen Visan prepared paperwork about the Governor's mask requirement for employees and had another officer, Officer Jacobs, drop it off for Defendants. *See id.* Officer Jacobs did so, handing it to Defendant Desautels. *Id.* Defendant said that he was not going to change his beliefs on the matter. *Id.*

On February 16, 2021, the Newport Police Department received another report via the Attorney General's Office that Defendants were violating the mask requirement. *See Attachment B.* Officer Nicholas Keithan conducted a compliance check on February 16. *Id.* When he arrived, he found a printed sign on the door stating that "customers are not required to wear a mask and employees are not required to wear a mask so do not ask one to put a mask on." *Id.* When he entered the building, he saw an employee without a mask. *Id.* He asked to speak to Defendant Desautels. *Id.* Defendant Desautels met with him, and was not wearing

a mask. *Id.* Officer Keithan tried to inform him of the Governor’s orders and provide literature about the order. *Id.* Defendant Desautels said requiring him to wear something on his face that he did not want to was a violation of his rights. *Id.*

The Attorney General’s Office sent Defendant Desautels a cease-and-desist order on February 17, 2021. *See* Attachment E.

As of today, February 19, Defendants are still operating in violation of the employee mask requirement. *See* Attachment B.

Defendants continue to operate in violation of the Governor’s emergency orders. *See* Attachment B. In doing so, Defendants are jeopardizing the health of their employees, customers, and the Vermont public-at large.

Discussion

Pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 40, the Attorney General “may bring an action for injunctive relief in the superior court of the county in which a violation occurs to compel compliance with the provisions of [the Emergency Management] chapter.”

A party seeking injunctive relief pursuant to Vermont Rule of Civil Procedure 65 must satisfy four factors: (1) that there is a threat of irreparable harm; (2) that the threat of irreparable harm outweighs the potential harm to other parties; (3) that there is a likelihood of success on the merits; and (4) that injunctive relief is in the public interest. *In re J.G. Juvenile*, 160 Vt. 250, 255 n.2 (1993). These factors are functionally indistinguishable from factors considered under the analogous federal rule. *Taylor v. Town of Cabot*, 2017 VT 92, ¶ 19 n.3, 205 Vt. 586, 178 A.3d 313.

“A temporary restraining order may be granted without written or oral notice to the adverse party or that party’s attorney only if it clearly appears from specific facts shown by affidavit or by the verified complaint that immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage will result to the applicant before the adverse party or that party’s attorney can be heard in opposition.” V.R.C.P. 65(a); *see P.E.T.E.L. Properties, Inc. v. McDonnell*, Docket No. 396-6-07 Rdcv, 2007 WL 6787222 (Vt. Super. June 21, 2007) (emergency ex parte temporary restraining order granted where a clear and ongoing violation of the terms of an easement threatened a property owner’s horse-boarding business); *see also Vt. Women’s Health Ctr. v. Operation Rescue*, 159 Vt. 141, 617 A.2d 411 (1992) (temporary restraining order prohibiting, among other things, physically blocking the entrance to health center, attempting to enter the building, or directing bullhorns or yelling at the health center).

I. The State is likely to succeed on its Complaint for relief.

a. The Governor has the authority to order that employees wear masks or cloth facial coverings when in the presence of others.

The Governor has the authority to order employees to wear masks when working in the presence of others. First, the Governor had the authority to declare the COVID-19 pandemic to be a state of emergency. As a result, the Governor can properly access emergency police powers to protect public health. The Governor’s mask requirement for employees is an appropriate exercise of those powers, because it is rationally related to the public health and taken in good faith. Even if the

Court applies a more stringent test, the Governor’s decision to require masks for employees working in the presence of others is lawful.

As a preliminary matter, the Governor was justified in declaring a state of emergency in Executive Order 01-20.⁵ The Governor may declare a state of emergency “in the event of an all-hazards event . . . that causes or may cause substantial damage or injury to persons or property within the bounds of the State in any manner[.]” 20 V.S.A. § 9. An “all-hazards event” includes a “health or disease-related emergency . . . which poses a threat or may pose a threat . . . to property or public safety in Vermont[.]” 20 V.S.A. § 2(1). This language unambiguously encompasses current events surrounding COVID-19—a pandemic disease that has been swiftly spreading throughout Vermont. Indeed, a Vermont court has already accepted the statutory basis for EO 01-20 and some of its addenda. *See Attachment C, State of Vermont v. Club Fitness of Vermont*, Docket No. 202-5-20 Rdcv, slip op. at 22 & n.15 (Vt. Super. Ct. Sept. 24, 2020).

The Governor has the authority to require Vermonters to wear masks when in close contact with others outside their household to prevent the spread of COVID-19. When there is no state of emergency, the Governor has the general authority to “make, amend and rescind the necessary orders, rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this [emergency management] chapter,” 20 V.S.A. § 8(b)(1). Now that he has properly declared a state of emergency, the Governor also has the power to enforce those rules, 20 V.S.A. § 9(1), and to “perform and exercise

⁵ Executive Order 01-20, and all associated addenda and directives, are available at <https://governor.vermont.gov/document-types/executive-orders>.

such other functions, powers and duties as may be deemed necessary to promote and secure the safety and protection of the civilian population.” 20 V.S.A. § 11(6).

The mask requirement for employees is well within the Governor’s broad statutory authority to respond to a health emergency.

The mask requirement for employees is also, moreover, an appropriate use of the State’s police power. A State has inherent authority “to enact quarantine laws and ‘health laws of every description.’” *Jacobson v. Massachusetts*, 197 U.S. 11, 25 (1905). “Upon the principle of self-defense, of paramount necessity, a community has the right to protect itself against an epidemic of disease which threatens the safety of its members.” *Id.* at 27. The police power is “the governmental power of conserving and safeguarding the public safety, health, and welfare.” *State v. Quattropani*, 99 Vt. 360, 133 A. 352, 353 (1926). And the executive’s powers are at their peak where the executive is expressly empowered by statute to act to protect public health. *Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. v. Sawyer*, 343 U.S. 579, 635-37 (1952) (Jackson, J., concurring).

The State is likely to succeed in enforcing the Governor’s order as a valid exercise of emergency power. The public health justification for the Governor’s mask requirement for employees overwhelmingly shows it is necessary to promote and secure the safety and protection of the civilian population of Vermont during the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person, primarily through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or even breathes. *Kelso Aff.* ¶ 19. Because respiratory droplets are

now understood to be the primary method of transmission, the use of facial coverings is very important in minimizing the transmission of the virus in places where people from multiple households may interact. *Id.* ¶¶ 19–20, 37. Indeed, it is a key tool in slowing the spread of COVID-19. *Id.* ¶ 20. Requiring the wearing of masks or cloth facial coverings when in the presence of others is therefore supported by authoritative public health guidance. *See id.* ¶¶ 24, 37. Any increase in occurrences of non-compliance with the mandatory health and safety guidance is likely to increase total case counts which in turn is likely to increase hospitalizations and adverse medical outcomes for Vermonters. *Id.* ¶ 44.

And courts have consistently upheld mask requirements implemented in response to COVID-19. *See Stewart v. Justice.*, No. CV 3:20-0611, 2021 WL 472937, at *5 (S.D.W. Va. Feb. 9, 2021) (dismissing challenge to mask mandate because “Governor consulted with public health officials, relied on data provided by credible sources, and collaborated with other public agencies to protect the public from a virus that has already killed thousands of West Virginians. Therefore, the Court finds that there is a rational basis for the Orders and that they bear a real and substantial relation to this public health crisis.”); *Frantz v. Beshear*, No. 3:20-CV-00034 (WOB), 2021 WL 254299, at *5 (E.D. Ky. Jan. 25, 2021) (dismissing challenge to mask mandate because “Court easily finds a rational relationship between Governor Beshear’s mask mandate and limiting the spread of COVID-19 in Kentucky”); *Delaney v. Baker*, No. CV 20-11154-WGY, 2021 WL 42340, at *13 (D. Mass. Jan. 6, 2021) (upholding mask mandate because “Governor Baker’s orders for

all residents to wear masks are rationally related to the interest in stemming the spread of COVID-19”); *Resurrection Sch. v. Gordon*, No. 1:20-CV-1016, 2020 WL 7639923, at *3 (W.D. Mich. Dec. 16, 2020) (finding plaintiffs unlikely to succeed on challenges to mask mandate); *Cangelosi v. Edwards*, No. CV 20-1991, 2020 WL 6449111, at *5 (E.D. La. Nov. 3, 2020) (“the face covering requirement does not violate any right guaranteed by federal law”); *Machovec v. Palm Beach Cty.*, No. 4D20-1765, 2021 WL 264163, at *6 (Fla. Dist. Ct. App. Jan. 27, 2021) (upholding determination that “facial covering mandate ‘has a clear rational basis based on the protection of public health’”). As one court recently noted in dismissing a challenge to a mask mandate, the mask mandate “seeks to protect the public health, safety and welfare,” which is “a legitimate governmental interest,” and the mandate “is rationally related to [that] legitimate governmental interest” – and the plaintiffs did “not point to a single court holding otherwise.” *Oakes v. Collier Cty.*, No. 220CV568FTM38NPM, 2021 WL 268387, at *3 (M.D. Fla. Jan. 27, 2021) (quotation omitted).

b. Defendants are violating the Governor’s mask requirement.

As described above, Defendants have been violating the employee mask requirement since at least November 2020—despite repeated attempts since November 2020 by the Newport Police Department and the Attorney General’s Office to bring them into compliance. *See* Attachments B, D, E. Defendants are still violating the requirement, and have expressed that they intend to continue to do so.

In short, Defendants are in repeated and flagrant violation of the Governor's Order and the addenda and guidance issued thereunder.

II. Defendants' continued operation in defiance of the Governor's orders and guidance thereunder will cause immediate and irreparable injury to the health and safety of Vermont.

The risks that someone may transmit or become infected with COVID-19 due to Defendants' clear violation of the Governor's executive order and the guidance issued thereunder is too great to permit Defendants to continue to operate their business while in violation of the executive order.

As described above, the State's response to COVID-19 has been to limit the ways in which Vermonters could be exposed to the disease. The State has set a strategy to slow the spread in order to protect those at greatest risk, ensure capacity at healthcare facilities, and minimize the risk to the public. Without the concerted cooperation of Vermonters modifying their behaviors in accordance with the Governor's orders, many more people will die. Kelso Aff. ¶¶ 30, 38-39.

Defendants' violation of the mask requirement for employees creates a high-risk environment for the spread of the virus. By violating the mask requirement, Defendants are placing their employees and customers at risk, as well as the Vermont public at large. The virus spreads quickly and undetectably—particularly when people are not masked. Kelso Aff., ¶¶ 10, 23. A maskless employee who is unknowingly infected with COVID-19 could come into work at Defendant's store and easily spread it to everyone else there. And a person – a customer or an

employee – who becomes infected at Defendants’ store could go home and very quickly spread the disease to, at a minimum, everyone in their household.

Moreover, Defendants, by flouting the Governor’s orders, are not only at high risk of spreading the disease within Vermont. They are also setting an example that, if left unchecked, could encourage others to follow. In this way, too, their behavior spreads greater risk throughout the community and the State. *See id.* ¶¶ 42–45.

Immediate injunctive relief is necessary to prevent this imminent and irreparable injury to the State and the public. “Irreparable harm is injury that is neither remote nor speculative, but actual and imminent and that cannot be remedied by an award of monetary damages.” *New York v. United States Dep’t of Homeland Sec.*, 969 F.3d 42, 86 (2d Cir. 2020). The harm Defendants are causing to the State by increasing the risk of COVID-19 transmission is actual, imminent, and irreparable; money could not remedy it. *See, e.g., Stagliano v. Herkimer Cent. Sch. Dist.*, 151 F. Supp. 3d 264, 273 (N.D.N.Y. 2015) (granting temporary restraining order allowing teachers to use sick leave for their children and noting that “the obvious potential for such issues as developing chronic health issues or spreading contagious diseases underscores the need for equitable relief”). Because virus transmission can occur daily, or even hourly, immediate injunctive relief is the only possible remedy.

This Court should grant the State’s motion for a temporary restraining order to direct that Defendants follow the Governor’s orders and the guidance issued

thereunder—as so many compliant Vermont businesses have—to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to protect our collective public health.

III. Defendants’ harm to the public health and safety far outweighs any conceivable harm to Defendants from an injunction.

The harm to the public from Defendants’ actions, as described above, far outweighs any conceivable harm to Defendants from an injunction issued by this Court. As noted above, Defendants can point to no constitutional rights that will be violated by requiring them to abide by the same public-health order as every other business in the State. Courts have held that mask requirements do not violate, or are unlikely to violate, the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment, *Stewart*, 2021 WL 472937, at *5; the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment, *Delaney*, 2021 WL 42340, at *13, *Resurrection Sch.*, 2020 WL 7639923, at *2; the Freedom of Assembly Clause of the First Amendment, *Oakes*, 2021 WL 268387, at *8; due process, *Frantz*, 2021 WL 254299, at *3; equal protection, *Resurrection Sch.*, 2020 WL 7639923, at *2, *Oakes*, 2021 WL 268387, at *2; or indeed “any right guaranteed by federal law.” *Cangelosi*, 2020 WL 6449111, at *5. Any inconvenience or annoyance that compliance with the Governor’s Order and addenda might cause Defendants is far outweighed by the harms their violations are causing to the public health.

IV. Injunctive relief is in the public interest.

For all the same reasons discussed above, an injunction restraining Defendants from continuing to violate the Governor’s Order and addenda is in the public interest. *See supra* Parts II & III. Where, as here, the government is party to

a suit, the final two factors—balance of the equities and the public interest—merge. *New York*, 969 F.3d at 58–59.

Moreover, where a violation of the law has been alleged, as it has here, that “has been considered a strong factor in favor of granting a preliminary injunction.” C. Wright & A. Miller, 11A *Fed. Prac. & Proc. Civil*, § 2948.4 (3d ed. 2020). “It even has been held that when the acts sought to be enjoined have been declared unlawful or clearly are against the public interest, plaintiff need show neither irreparable injury nor a balance of hardship in his favor, nor a likelihood of success on the merits.” *Id.* As described above, failing to wear a mask or cloth facial covering when working in the presence of others is a clear violation of the Governor’s properly constituted emergency order. *See supra* Part I.

Finally, courts in other jurisdictions have found that the public interest weighs in favor of upholding COVID-19 emergency orders of the kind at issue here. *See Legacy Church, Inc. v. Kunkel*, 455 F. Supp. 3d 1100, 1165 (D.N.M. 2020) (finding public interest in limiting COVID-19 outbreak greater than public interest in gathering, where no First Amendment issues were found); *Hartman v. Acton*, No. 2:20-CV-1952, 2020 WL 1932896, at *11 (S.D. Ohio Apr. 21, 2020) (“While the immediacy and irreparability of harm to Plaintiffs [business owners] is speculative, the harm to the public if the Director’s order is enjoined is potentially catastrophic.”). For the same reasons that upholding an emergency order is in the public interest, enforcing the Governor’s order in this case also serves the public interest.

This factor, like the others, weighs strongly in favor of granting a temporary restraining order here.

WHEREFORE, for the forgoing reasons, the State respectfully requests that the Court issue an order that:

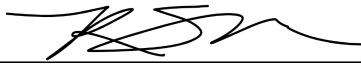
1. grants this temporary restraining order immediately restraining Defendants from violating Amended and Restated Executive Order 01-20 and its addenda and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development's Phased Restart Work Safe Guidance, and specifically ordering Defendants to require their employees, agents, and contractors to wear masks or facial coverings over their nose and mouth while working in the presence of others at Defendants' place of business; and
2. sets a hearing date as soon as possible on this motion for preliminary injunction to require that Defendants comply with any and all applicable COVID-19-related Executive Orders and addenda and guidance issued thereunder.

DATED at Montpelier, Vermont this 19th day of February 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

THOMAS J. DONOVAN, JR.
ATTORNEY GENERAL

By:



Rachel Smith, ERN 10679
Deputy Solicitor General
Ryan Kane, ERN 6705
Assistant Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General

109 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05609
(802)828-3178
rachel.e.smith@vermont.gov
ryan.kane@vermont.gov

Attachment A

Kelso Affirmation

6. I am familiar with Governor Scott's Amended and Restated Executive Order 01-20 and its associated Addenda and Directives.
7. On an ongoing basis, I have created and reviewed the Vermont Department of Health's guidance to the Governor and guidance to the public. Specifically, I oversee the state's epidemiologic response including surveillance, prevention and disease control. This includes, but is not limited to, creating and approving policies and protocols, advising the public as well as government and private sector businesses on preventing the spread of COVID-19, and developing and implementing COVID-19 mitigation strategies for health care and other sectors.
8. There is no known cure for COVID-19 and even with the development of various therapeutic medicines, COVID-19 remains a significant health risk to those who become ill with it.
9. People with COVID-19 can experience a wide range of symptoms, ranging from mild illness to severe or critical illness. Some people become infected but do not develop any symptoms and do not feel unwell.
10. SARS-CoV-2 is able to be transmitted during the pre-symptomatic incubation period, and by people who are infected but are asymptomatic.
11. COVID-19 is a new disease and there is limited information regarding risk factors for severe disease. Older people and those with underlying medical problems are more likely to develop serious illness or to die, but anyone

infected with COVID-19 is at some risk of developing serious illness and dying.

12. People who become seriously ill with COVID-19 may require hospitalization, including admission to an Intensive Care Unit (ICU). These patients sometimes require a ventilator to help them breathe.
13. COVID-19 has an overall fatality rate of approximately 1.8% in the U.S.
14. On March 7 and 11 of 2020, VDH detected the first two cases of COVID-19 in Vermont.
15. If COVID-19 spreads unchecked, it could overwhelm the capacity of the State's health care system to care for those with serious illness. The State could experience shortages in needed inpatient hospital beds, intensive care unit beds, ventilators, and personal protective equipment for hospital staff.
16. One of the only tools available to fight this public health crisis is to try to slow the spread of the virus. Slowing the spread of the virus will reduce the number of patients needing emergent medical care at the same time. This is the best way to try to ensure that everyone who needs life-saving medical resources in Vermont will have access to them when they are most needed.
17. The incubation period for the virus—the period during which a person who has been exposed to the virus does not yet show symptoms of infection—is thought to be between 2 and 14 days.
18. Viral transmission is more likely when people are in close proximity or contact with one another.

19. The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person, primarily through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or even breathes.
20. Because of this, the widespread use of cloth facial coverings, especially when indoors and in close proximity to others, is a key tool in slowing the spread of COVID-19.
21. Respiratory droplets can also land on surfaces and objects. It is possible that a person could get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes. Spread from touching surfaces is not thought to be a common way that COVID-19 spreads.
22. There is evidence that the virus spreads more easily indoors than outdoors. The virus may be most transmissible in indoor spaces with poor ventilation or air circulation.
23. The best tools we have for managing the spread of the virus in Vermont involve behavioral modifications to reduce transmission of the virus. Without any behavioral modifications, the virus spreads very easily and sustainably between people.
24. Behavioral modifications that slow the spread of the virus include: wearing masks, frequent hand washing, frequent washing of surfaces touched by many people, and distancing from other people by at least six feet.
25. Even with behavioral modifications, the virus can and does spread.

26. Any place where people congregate with non-household members risks increasing the rate of viral transmission from its current rate.
27. We have community transmission of the virus in Vermont, which means that some people who get infected with the virus are unsure about how or where they became infected. We have been experiencing community transmission at least since March 19, 2020.
28. Vermont has been under a variety of emergency restrictions for months. Initially, these restrictions included a stay-at-home order issued on April 24, 2020 which was relatively effective in slowing the spread of the virus.
29. Thereafter, Vermont “re-opened” parts of the economy. It did so slowly and deliberately. Because of the incubation period of the virus, it takes approximately two weeks for the change in transmission rate to be revealed in the population’s incidence of infection. By phasing the re-opening of different sectors and activities in a coordinated way, Vermont was able to monitor how reducing different restrictions correlated with changes in the transmission rate.
30. One of the State’s goals throughout the pandemic is to keep the number of people needing hospitalization and acute care as a result of COVID-19 infections within the State’s resources to care for them. If we have more patients than we have capacity to care for those patients—for example, if we run out of intensive care unit beds or ventilators—more people will die.

31. One benefit of the phased approach is that, if any one phase of re-opening correlates with a greater than expected rate of transmission, we can adjust subsequent phases accordingly.
32. Last fall and into the holidays, Vermont experienced a second surge in COVID-19 cases which exceeded the case numbers and infection rates experienced at the outset of the pandemic. This required the reimposition of some restrictions and a prohibition on multi-family social gatherings.
33. While case numbers have stabilized recently, any increase in cases could overwhelm the State's healthcare resources including the ability to supply sufficient personal protective equipment and critical medical equipment to handle a dramatic surge in need.
34. Throughout the phased re-opening, certain fundamental mandatory health and safety requirements for all business, non-profit, and governmental operations have been in place.
35. These mandatory requirements include that employees must wear face coverings over their nose and mouth when in the presence of others.
36. The opening of in-person business operations is predicated on all business, non-profit, and governmental operations following these requirements in order for the in-person activities to be done in a safe manner.
37. As noted above, because respiratory droplets are now understood to be the primary method of transmission the use of facial coverings is very important

in minimizing the transmission of the virus in places where people from multiple households may interact.

38. There are now multiple effective vaccines for COVID-19. However, until the population is widely vaccinated, something that will not occur for at least some months, the mandatory health and safety requirements must be followed in order to prevent another wave of cases.
39. Every person in the State is potentially at risk of infection. Currently, only 14.9% of Vermont's population has received at least one dose of vaccine for COVID-19—meaning 85.1% of the population has not. The two current vaccines were 95% and 94.1% effective among clinical trial participants, which means that about 1 in 20 people who are fully vaccinated might not be protected against COVID-19. Additionally, the duration of natural immunity to COVID-19 from prior infection is not well understood. Further, it is not known at this time whether people who are vaccinated or have been infected with COVID-19 and naturally developed antibodies can still carry and transmit the virus to others. It is therefore important for all Vermonters to continue to wear masks and take other steps to limit transmission of the virus.
40. As of the morning of February 19, 2021, VDH reports:
 - a. 14,251 total cases of COVID-19 in Vermont;
 - b. 193 deaths attributed to COVID-19 in Vermont;
 - c. 37 currently hospitalized due to COVID-19, with 13 in the ICU;

- d. 2 hospitalized “under investigation” related to COVID-19; and
- e. 245 travelers and 196 contacts being monitored in Vermont for COVID-19.

- 41. COVID-19 cases have been documented in every county in Vermont. Orleans County has 404 reported cases as of the morning of February 19, 2021.
- 42. Some of the factors that influence the rate of infection in Vermont include under what limits and guidelines Vermont businesses are allowed to operate in-person services, and whether and to what extent individuals comply with mandatory behavioral changes described above and set forth in mandatory health and safety guidance promulgated by VDH and ACCD.
- 43. COVID-19 infection rates vary dramatically based on the above factors, but non-compliance with the mandatory health and safety guidance has been linked to outbreaks of the virus and increases in community spread.
- 44. Any increase in occurrences of non-compliance with the mandatory health and safety guidance is likely to increase total case counts which in turn is likely to increase hospitalizations and adverse medical outcomes for Vermonters.
- 45. If individuals and businesses do not follow the prescribed mandatory health and safety requirements, we risk the health and safety of workers in critical industries and of those living and working in high-risk facilities such as long-term care facilities.

I declare that the above statement is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that if the above statement is false, I will be subject to the penalty of perjury or other sanctions in the discretion of the court.

DATED at Peru, New York on February 19, 2021



Patsy Kelso
Patsy Kelso
State Epidemiologist, Vermont Department of Health

Attachment B

Jacobs Affidavit



AFFIDAVIT
VERMONT SUPERIOR COURT
ORLEANS UNIT
CRIMINAL DIVISION



NOW COMES Officer Tanner Jacobs of the Newport Police Department, affiant being duly sworn and on oath, deposes and says;

21NP000442

1. On February 19, 2019, at the request of the Vermont Attorney General's Office, I reviewed the following incident reports, which were generated as a result of law enforcement response to complaints that the owner (Andre Desautels DOB [REDACTED]) and/or employees of the UPS Store located on 137 Main Street in Newport City, Vermont were not wearing masks. The following is a list and synopsis of these complaints in chronological order as the cases were generated at the Newport Police Department.
2. (20NP003675) On 11/9/2021 the Newport Police Department received a report via online reporting system, of a mask mandate violation at the UPS Store located at 137 Main Street in Newport City. According to a narrative filed by Sergeant Rivers with the Newport Police Department, the store owner Andre Desautels was spoken too. According to Sergeant Nicholas Rivers, Desautels stated there was no way he was wearing a mask and he would shut down before doing so.
3. (21NP000238) On 02/01/2021 Diane May DOB [REDACTED] contacted the Newport Police Department reporting that the manager of the UPS Store located at 137 Main Street in Newport City, was not in compliance with the COVID mask regulations. I went to the UPS Store and spoke with the manager Desautels. I observed signage outside and inside the store and the female subject at the counter wearing a mask. Desautels was in a back room / office and was not wearing a mask. I advised Desautels of the complaint and he replied. "You are talking to the wrong person about wearing mask." Desautels insisted he was in compliance as he was not within six feet of anyone for over 15 minutes.
4. (21NP000345) On 2/11/2021 Officer Carmen Visan received a report from the Vermont Attorney General's Office, of a mask mandate violation at the UPS Store located at 137 Main Street in Newport City. On 2/12/2021 Officer David Jacobs followed-up with this incident by dropping off paperwork that Officer Visan had prepared for the UPS Store. Officer David Jacobs advised in his narrative that he gave the paperwork directly to Desautels. Desautels stated he was not going to change his beliefs of the matter.
5. (21NP000358) On 02/12/2021 Desautels called the Newport Police Department advising that he was getting harassing phone calls in regards to his sign stating employees were not wearing mask. According to Officer David Jacobs, he spoke with the subjects who were concerned about this issue and agreed to stop calling the store.
6. (21NP000409) On 2/16/2021 the Newport Police Department received a report via the Vermont Attorney General's Officer regarding a mask compliance issue at the UPS Store located at 137 Main Street in Newport City. According to a narrative filed by Officer Keithian with the Newport Police

Department upon arrival he noticed a sign stating that customers are not required to wear a mask and employees are not required to wear a mask so do not ask one to put a mask on. Officer Keithan notes that entering the building he observed an employee not wearing a mask. Officer Keithan states he met with the owner Desaultels who was not wearing a mask. Officer Keithan provided a hard copy of mask guidelines to Desaultels. Officer Keithan writes that Desaultels stated he was social distancing and it was a violation of his rights to put something on his face that he does not want to wear.

7. (21NP000425) On 2/18/2021 the Newport Police Department received a report via the Vermont Attorney General's Office regarding a mask compliance issue at the UPS Store located at 137 Main Street in Newport City. Officer Royce Lancaster with the Newport Police Department went to the UPS Store and spoke with Desaultels. Desaultels and a female employee and another female subject he advised was a nurse doing a study were not wearing mask. Desaultels was aware of the mask compliance violation and in synopsis expressed his belief that it wasn't right. Desaultels stated he had heard from the Vermont Attorney Generals Office and was pushing back as it was something he believed in.
8. (21NP000427) On 11/10/20 a mask compliance complaint was submitted electronically to the State of Vermont. According to the information logging this case, Sergeant Rivers received the tip which advised both staff members were reportedly not wearing mask on the aforementioned date. It is not clear if there was a delay in the notification of this message as the case was created on 2/18/2021.
9. (21NP000428) On 12/4/2021 a mask compliance complaint was submitted electronically to the State of Vermont. According to the information logging this case, Sergeant Rivers received the tip which advised both staff members were reportedly not wearing mask or social distancing on the aforementioned date. It is not clear if there was a delay in the notification of this message as the case was created on 2/18/2021.
10. (21NP000443) On 2/19/2021 by request of the Vermont Attorney General's Office, Officer Joshua Lillis conducted a compliance check at the UPS Store located at 137 Main Street in Newport City. Officer Lillis advised a female employee was in the store not wearing a mask. The female employee was advised by Officer Lillis that she was not in compliance with the mask mandate. The female employee replied "yep."
11. It should also be noted that a sign had been posted on the stores front entry door stating "Please feel from to wear your mask into the store. We choose not wear a mask and if you're uncomfortable with this, we ask that you do not come in to ensure your comfort. If you decide to come in do not ask us to put a mask on. Thank you for understanding." It is not documented when this sign was placed outside this establishment, however it is first noted in Officer Keithan's narrative on 2/16/21.
12. The above listed cases are a compilation of all known mask-mandate violations reported to the Newport Police Department.

Subscribed and sworn to before me on

this 19 day of February, 2021


(Notary Public)


(Affiant)

2/19/21
(Date)

Attachment C

State of Vermont v. Club Fitness of Vermont, Docket
No. 202-5-20 Rdcv, (Vt. Super. Ct. Sept. 24, 2020)

VERMONT SUPERIOR COURT

RUTLAND UNIT
CIVIL DIVISION

State of Vermont,
Plaintiff

v.

Club Fitness of Vermont, Inc. and
Sean Manovill,
Defendants and Counter Plaintiffs

v.

State of Vermont, Governor Philip B. Scott,
and Attorney General Thomas J. Donovan, Jr.,
Counter Defendants

Docket No. 202-5-20 Rdcv

RULING ON MOTION TO DISMISS DEFENDANTS' COUNTERCLAIM
(Motion # 6)

The core issue in this case is whether certain executive orders, issued by Vermont Governor Philip B. Scott in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Vermont, constitute an unconstitutional governmental taking of private property. For the reasons set forth herein, this court concludes that they do not.

Plaintiff, the State of Vermont, commenced this suit on May 15, 2020, as an enforcement action against Defendant Club Fitness of Vermont, Inc. and its owner, Defendant Sean Manoville, who own and operate fitness centers in Rutland and Castleton, Vermont. The State seeks civil penalties and injunctive relief, among other things, for Defendants' alleged violation of Addenda 4 and 6 of Governor Scott's Executive Order 01-20, ordering all "gymnasiums, fitness centers and similar exercise facilities" to "cease all in-person operations" on account of Vermont's COVID-19 outbreak.

On May 27, 2020, the Defendants filed a Counterclaim alleging that the actions taken by the State, Governor and Attorney General since March 23, 2020, to promulgate and enforce the Executive Order, constitute an “unlawful taking” of Defendants’ business, in violation of Chapter I, Article 2 of the Vermont Constitution and the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution. Defendants seek an award of damages under 20 V.S.A. § 11(5) and 42 U.S.C.A. §§ 1983 and 1985 from the State, Governor and Attorney General for the “economic and emotional distress losses suffered by [the Defendants] as a result of the ... unlawful taking without compensation” of their business.¹

Presently before the court is a motion filed by the State, Governor and Attorney General pursuant to V.R.C.P. 12(b)(6) to dismiss Defendants’ Counterclaim for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. The movants contend that the Counterclaim must be dismissed because the Counterclaim fails to allege any unlawful governmental taking of the Defendants’ business. Defendants oppose the motion.

A hearing on the motion was held on August 12, 2020, and the motion was taken under advisement.² For the reasons discussed below, the motion to dismiss is now *granted*.

¹ On August 5, 2020, Defendants moved to amend their Counterclaim to add facts concerning events which occurred after the filing of their original Counterclaim, and to clarify their various legal and Constitutional claims against the State, Governor and Attorney General.

² The procedural posture of this case is somewhat complex. The State of Vermont filed a motion for a Temporary Restraining Order (“TRO”) on May 15th. The State’s request for a TRO was granted. In response, Defendants filed their own motion for a preliminary injunction. In light of the Governor’s subsequent easing of restrictions on fitness centers, the parties withdrew their motions for preliminary injunctions and the TRO expired on its own, but the State declined to withdraw its Complaint for civil penalties and costs. The Defendants then filed their Counterclaim against the State, and they filed a motion to add Governor Scott and Attorney General Donovan individually as additional counter defendants. At the oral argument held on August 12, 2020, the court orally granted Defendants’ motion to add the Governor and Attorney General as parties and also granted Defendants’ motion to amend their Counterclaim.

Standard of Review

When ruling on a motion to dismiss under V.R.C.P. 12(b)(6), the court is required to take all the facts alleged in the claimant's pleading as true. The court must determine whether, assuming the facts alleged are true, the allegations are sufficient to state a legal claim upon which relief may be granted. Colby v. Umbrella, Inc., 2008 VT 20, ¶ 5 n.1, 184 Vt. 1. Also, the court must make all reasonable inferences of fact from the pleading in favor of the claimant, and the court must treat all contravening assertions in the moving party's pleadings as false. Reynolds v. Sullivan, 136 Vt. 1, 3 (1978) (citing 5 C. Wright & Miller, Federal Practice and Procedure s 2713, at 691, 693 (1969)). The court must not dismiss a claim under V.R.C.P. 12(b)(6) unless "it appears beyond doubt that there exist no facts or circumstances that would entitle the [claimant] to relief." Murray v. City of Burlington, 2012 VT 11. "The purpose of a motion to dismiss is to test the law of the claim, not the facts which support it." Powers v. Office of Child Support, 173 Vt. 390, 395 (2002) (citations omitted).

Statement of Facts

For purposes of the motion to dismiss, the court assumes the following alleged facts to be true:

Sean Manovill is the owner of Club Fitness of Vermont, Inc., which owns and operates a fitness center providing exercise facilities to clients, many of whom consider Defendants' facilities essential to their health and well-being (Amended Counterclaim ¶¶ 1-6). Club Fitness is an immaculately clean fitness center, with several stations for cleaning equipment and sanitizing hands (Id. ¶ 7). Club Fitness has been open since 2016 and had built up a client membership of approximately 500 before the Governor ordered a shutdown (Id. ¶ 8).

Manovill closed Club Fitness on March 23, 2020, when Governor Scott issued his first emergency order (Id. ¶ 10). Club Fitness remained closed until May 1, 2020 (Id.). As the only source of income for Manovill and his wife, Jeanine, the six- week closure resulted in Manovill losing all income from his business (Id. ¶¶ 11-12). During the closure, Manovill received numerous calls and messages from clients requesting the fitness center re-open, as their physical and mental wellness was declining (Id. ¶¶ 13-14). Based on these requests and the need for income to support his family, Manovill reopened Club Fitness on May 1, 2020 (Id. ¶ 14).

On May 11, 2020, Vermont Attorney General T.J. Donovan contacted Manovill and told him to close the fitness center or else a suit would be filed against him (Id. ¶ 15). After Manovill indicated that he would remain open, Donovan requested that Manovill close for a week to provide a reprieve, indicating that he thought there was a possibility that the Governor would allow fitness centers to re-open by May 15th (Id. ¶ 15). As a result of Donovan's representations, Manovill shut down Club Fitness until May 15th (Id.).

On May 15th, Manovill re-opened the facility, despite the lack of any announcement by the Governor whether the shutdown would continue (Id. ¶ 16). At 11:00am on May 15th, Manovill learned that Governor Scott had extended the emergency order (Id. ¶ 17). Sergeant Whitehead and Corporal Plemmons of the Rutland Police Department visited Club Fitness to take notes and ask Manovill questions that day, but neither officer told Manovill to close the fitness center (Id.). Therefore, Manovill remained open until 5:00 p.m., despite the Governor's emergency order; at no point that day were there more than ten people at the fitness center at one time (Id.).

Later that day, Attorney General Donovan, on behalf of the State of Vermont, filed this suit against Manovill and Club Fitness and obtained a temporary restraining order against them

(Id. ¶ 18). On Sunday, May 17, Manovill opened Club Fitness for a few hours, with a few clients attending (Id. ¶ 19). On May 18, Manovill placed fitness equipment outside the facility, after realizing the court order did not prohibit outdoor fitness activities at his facility (Id. ¶ 20). Manovill provided customers with hand sanitizer and cleaning material to clean the equipment (Id.). On May 20, the Attorney General told Manovill to close the outdoor facility, and he threatened to ask the court to hold Manovill in contempt, which he indicated could result in jail time (Id. ¶ 21). Manovill closed Club Fitness and has remained closed ever since (Id. ¶ 22).

At no time has the government offered to compensate Manovill for his losses (Id. ¶ 23). Manovill and Club Fitness suffered a 100% loss of business between March 23, 2020, and June 1, 2020, as a result of Governor Scott's emergency orders (Id. ¶ 25). Since June 1st Defendants' loss of business from the shutdown is projected to be at least 75% (Id. ¶ 26). As a result of the loss of business, Manovill is planning to close the fitness center and permanently move out of state (Id. ¶ 27).

Analysis

Defendants Manovill and Fitness Center contend that they are entitled to an award of damages for their losses pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 11 and 42 U.S.V.A. §§ 1983 and 1985 because the Governor's emergency orders, requiring Defendants to close their business due to the COVID-19 outbreak, constitute an uncompensated governmental taking of their property in violation of Chapter 1, Article 2 of the Vermont Constitution and the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution. The State, Governor and Attorney General deny that contention and argue that Defendants' Counterclaim must be dismissed because it fails to allege any taking resulting from the Governor's orders. This court will address the Constitutional claims first, the statutory claims second, and the immunity claim last.

Chapter 1, Article 2 and the Fifth Amendment

Chapter 1, Article 2 of the Vermont Constitution provides:

That private property ought to be subservient to public uses when necessity requires it, nevertheless, whenever any person's property is taken for the use of the public, the owner ought to receive an equivalent in money.

The Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution provides “nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.” It is undisputed that the State has not offered to compensate Defendants for the closing of their fitness center. The question, therefore, is whether Defendants’ fitness center business was “taken” for public use by the Governor’s executive orders.

“Because the federal and Vermont Constitutions use virtually the same test for takings review, ... the analysis and result ... are the same under both....” Ondovchik Family L.P v. Agency of Transportation, 2010 VT 35, ¶ 14, 187 Vt. 556 (*quoting Conway v. Sorrell*, 894 F.Supp. 794, 801 n. 8 (D. Vt. 1995)). The purpose of the Takings Clause is “to bar Government from forcing some people alone to bear public burdens which, in all fairness and justice, should be borne by the public as a whole.” Armstrong v. United States, 364 U.S. 40, 49 (1960). “The Takings Clause does not prohibit the taking of private property, but instead places a condition on the exercise of that power” by requiring the government to compensation the property owner. Lingle v. Chevron U.S.A. Inc., 544 U.S. 528, 536-37 (2005). “For a property loss to be compensable as a taking, the government must ‘intend[] to invade a protected property interest or the asserted invasion [must be] the direct, natural, or probable result of an authorized activity

and not the incidental or consequential injury inflicted by the action.”³ Lorman v. City of Rutland, 2018 VT 64, ¶ 35, 207 Vt. 598 (quoting Ondovchik, 2010 VT 35, ¶ 16).

“There are two types of cases cognizable under the Takings Clause: physical takings and regulatory takings.” McCarthy v. Cuomo, 2020 WL 3286530, at *4 (E.D.N.Y. June 18, 2020) (citing 1256 Hertel Ave. Associates, LLC v. Calloway, 761 F.3d 252, 263 (2d Cir. 2014)). A physical taking “occur[s] when the government physically takes possession of an interest in property for some public purpose.” Buffalo Teachers Fed. v. Tobe, 464 F.3d 362, 374 (2d Cir. 2006) (“The fact of a taking is fairly obvious in physical takings cases: for example, the government might occupy or take over a leasehold interest for its own purposes...or the government might take over a part of a rooftop of an apartment building so that cable access may be brought to residences within.”) (internal citations omitted). A regulatory taking is an interference with property rights that “arises from a public program adjusting the benefits and burdens of economic life to promote the public good[.]” Id. (quoting Penn Central Transp. Co. v. City of New York, 438 U.S. 104, 124 (1978)). “The Supreme Court has ‘generally eschewed any set

³ This court would be remiss not to mention Jacobson v. Massachusetts, the landmark case decided more than 100 years ago during a smallpox epidemic, which developed the framework governing emergency public health and public safety measures. 197 U.S. 11 (1905). In Jacobson, the Court held that “the rights of the individual in respect of his liberty may at times, under the pressure of great dangers, be subjected to such restraint, to be enforced by reasonable regulations, as the safety of the general public may demand.” Jacobson, 197 U.S. at 29. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Jacobson has been called “the controlling Supreme Court precedent that squarely governs judicial review of rights-challenges to emergency public health measures.” In re Abbott, 954 F.3d 772, 785 (5th Cir. 2020). “[A] community has the right to protect itself against an epidemic of disease which threatens the safety of its members,” including by “enact[ing] quarantine laws and health laws of every description.” Jacobson, 197 U.S. at 27, 25, 25 S.Ct. 358). See South Bay United Pentecostal Church v. Newsom, 140 S. Ct. 1613, 1614 (2020) (Kavanaugh, J., dissenting from denial of application for injunctive relief) (“[States] undoubtedly ha[ve] a compelling interest in combating the spread of COVID-19 and protecting the health of [their] citizens.”).

formula' for identifying regulatory takings, instead 'preferring to engage in essentially ad hoc, factual inquiries' to determine in each case whether the challenged property restriction rises to the level of a taking." 1256 Hertel Ave. Assoc., LLC v. Calloway, 761 F.3d 252, 264 (2d 2014) (*quoting* Lucas v. S.C. Coastal Council, 505 U.S. 1003, 1015, (1992)).

There are two types of regulatory takings: categorical and non-categorical. A categorical taking occurs "where regulation denies all economically beneficial or productive use of land." Lucas, 505 U.S. at 1015. A Lucas taking is a "relatively narrow' and relatively rare taking category[] confined to the 'extraordinary circumstance when *no* productive or economically beneficial use of land is permitted[.]'" Bridge Aina Le'a, LLC v. Land Use Comm'n, 950 F.3d 610, 625–26 (9th Cir. 2020) (*quoting* Lingle, 544 U.S. at 538 and Lucas, 505 U.S. at 1017). "Anything less than a 'complete elimination of value,' or a 'total loss' would require the kind of analysis applied in Penn Central" and is considered a non-categorical regulatory taking. Tahoe-Sierra Preservation Council, Inc. v. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, 535 U.S. 302, 330 (2002) (*quoting* Lucas, 505 U.S. at 1019-1020, n. 8). Penn Central has set forth familiar factors paramount to the taking inquiry: (1) "the economic impact of the regulation on the claimant"; (2) "the extent to which the regulation has interfered with distinct investment-backed expectations"; and (3) "the character of the governmental action." Penn Central, 438 U.S. at 124. "Also telling, is the 'character of the governmental action,' particularly 'whether it amounts to a physical invasion' or appropriation of property or instead merely affects property interests through 'some public program adjusting the benefits and

burdens of economic life to promote the common good.”⁴ 1256 Hertel Ave., 761 F.3d at 264 (quoting Penn Central, 438 U.S. at 124).

In McCarthy, the owner of a New York restaurant, bar and gentleman’s club, claimed that the executive orders issued by Governor Cuomo which resulted in the restaurant closing was, among other things, a violation of the Fifth Amendment takings clause.⁵ The court determined that because “[n]o government officials have taken physical possession of any property belonging to McCarthy or the Blush Club,” there was no physical taking. Id. at *5.

Moving on to a regulatory taking analysis, the McCarthy court concluded that

[t]he COVID-19 Executive Orders plainly do not deny McCarthy all economically beneficial use of his property. He could, for example, offer food and drinks from the Blush Club for take-out or delivery...[i]f McCarthy has lost all income from his club, that is a result of a voluntary choice not to pursue alternative business models that would allow the business to remain open while complying with the regulation. McCarthy’s voluntary choice to close his business

⁴ In Buffalo Teachers Fed’n, the court considered whether a wage freeze was a taking. In so considering, the Court noted that the “wage freeze is temporary and operates only during a control period,” and the “wage freeze is a negative restriction rather than an affirmative exploitation by the state. Nothing is affirmatively taken by the government...The freeze is in this respect like a temporary cap on how much plaintiffs may charge for their services,” and finally, that the “temporary suspension of plaintiffs’ wage increase arises from a public program that undoubtedly burdens the plaintiffs in order to promote the common good.” 464 F.3d at 375. Based on these factors, the court was not persuaded that the plaintiffs had established a taking had occurred.

⁵ In Defendants’ Memorandum in Opposition to Motion to Dismiss, Defendants claim there are “a dearth” of court decisions on the issue as to whether temporarily shutting down legitimate, innocent businesses because of a perceived emergency threat of contagion constitutes a “taking” under the Fifth Amendment or similar state constitutions. While Defendants only cited to one case, Friends of Danny DeVito v. Wolf, 227 A.3d 872 (Pa. 2020), there have been at least five other courts that have addressed the issue and determined such shut-downs did not constitute a taking. See McCarthy v. Cuomo, 2020 WL 3286530 (E.D.N.Y. June 18, 2020); PCG-SP Venture I LLC v. Newsom, 2020 WL 4344631 (C.D. Cal. June 23, 2020); TJM 64, Inc. v. Harris, 2020 WL 4352756 (W.D. Tenn. July 29, 2020); Auracle Homes, LLC v. Lamont, 2020 WL 4558682 (D.Conn. Aug. 7, 2020); Lebanon Valley Auto Racing Corp. v. Cuomo, 2020 WL 4596921 (N.D.N.Y. Aug. 11, 2020). Defendants appear not to recognize the reality of COVID-19, the state of emergencies that have been announced throughout the country, and the attempts by courts at all levels to address situations similar to the present case.

also makes him unlikely to succeed in an ad hoc factual analysis of the alleged regulatory taking. He cannot demonstrate any causal connection between the COVID-19 Executive Orders and his financial losses because his choice to close the club entirely was not mandated by the regulation. Moreover, all of his allegations of economic impact are vague and conclusory... Thus, the Fifth Amendment Takings Clause claim is unlikely to succeed on the merits.

McCarthy, at *5.

In addition to McCarthy, several courts across the country have addressed whether executive orders closing or restricting business during the COVID-19 pandemic constitute a taking. In line with McCarthy, no court has found that such closings or restrictions have resulted in a deprivation of all economically beneficial use of such property, constituting a taking under Lucas. See PCG-SP Venture I LLC v. Newsom, 2020 WL 4344631 (C.D. Cal. June 23, 2020); TJM 64, Inc. v. Harris, 2020 WL 4352756 (W.D. Tenn. July 29, 2020); Auracle Homes, LLC v. Lamont, 2020 WL 4558682 (D.Conn. Aug. 7, 2020). Rather, these courts focused their analysis on the Penn Central factors: “(1) the economic impact of the regulation on the claimant; (2) the extent to which the regulation has interfered with distinct investment-backed expectations; and (3) the character of the governmental action.” Murr v. Wisconsin, 137 S. Ct. 1933, 1943 (2017).

In PCG-SP Venture I LLC v. Newsom, 2020 WL 4344631 (C.D. Cal. June 23, 2020), a California company that operates a hotel brought suit against the California Governor, alleging that it had “been forced to close its [h]otel, cease operations, and terminate a majority of its employees as a result of the” Governor’s Orders. Id. at *3. Plaintiff argued that the Orders constituted a “complete and total regulatory and physical taking” of plaintiff’s property, presumably in reference to Lucas. Id. at * 9. The court determined, however, that plaintiff retained “some productive or economically beneficial

use of its property... Plaintiff is free, for example, to sell food or beverages on the premises and engage in commercial construction or development of the Hotel.” Id. at *10. The court also concluded that “[t]o the extent Plaintiff could provide evidence of lost profits or interference with investment-backed expectations, the character of the government action at issue would likely outweigh either factor.” Id. “Penn Central explained that regulations, statutes, and ordinances that merely ‘adjust[] the benefits and burdens of economic life to promote the common good’ rather than enact a “physical invasion” of property rarely constitute a taking.” Id. (*quoting Penn Central*, 438 U.S. at 124). Ultimately, the Court found that, “to the extent the Orders temporarily deprive Plaintiff of the use and benefit of its Hotel, the Takings Clause is indifferent. The State is entitled to prioritize the health of the public over the property rights of the individual.” PCG-SP, 2020 WL 4344631, at *10.

The plaintiff owners of several limited service restaurants in TJM 64, Inc. v. Harris, 2020 WL 4352756 (W.D. Tenn. July 29, 2020) asserted that the applicable executive order qualified as “as a categorical taking under Lucas...and, alternatively, qualifies as a regulatory taking under the framework established by Penn Central.” Id. at *2. The court first rejected the Lucas taking, stating that “[w]hile it may not accord with Plaintiffs’ pre-pandemic financial plans to operate their businesses in ways the Order allows, it does not follow that the Closure Order has necessarily stripped Plaintiffs’ businesses of *all* their value.” Id. at *6. Looking to the Penn Central factors, the court found that although the “first and second Penn Central factors support Plaintiffs, the third factor does not and outweighs the other two factors.” Id. “On balance, the Court [found] that Defendants’ need to effectively and quickly respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by

promulgating the July 8, 2020 Closure Order outweighs any other considerations warranting a finding that the Order amounts to a taking.” *Id.* at *7. *See also Friends of Danny DeVito v. Wolf*, 227 A.3d 872, 895-96 (Pa. 2020) (concluding that petitioners, a Pennsylvania candidate committee, did not establish a regulatory taking as the executive order resulted “in only a temporary loss of the use of the Petitioners' business premises, and the Governor's reason for imposing said restrictions on the use of their property, namely to protect the lives and health of millions of Pennsylvania citizens, undoubtedly constitutes a classic example of the use of the police power to protect the lives, health, morals, comfort, and general welfare of the people”) (internal quotations omitted).

A Connecticut district court also recently addressed the takings issue under the Penn Central factors, as related to the state’s Executive Orders which sought to “temporarily limit the ability of residential landlords to initiate eviction proceedings against tenants and allow tenants to apply security deposit funds to past due rents, provided the security deposit amount exceeds the value of one month’s rent.” Auracle Homes, LLC v. Lamont, 2020 WL 4558682, at *13 (D.Conn. Aug. 7, 2020). As to the first factor of economic impact, the court stated that the “Executive Orders constitute a regulatory taking only if they ‘effectively prevented [Plaintiffs] from making any economic use of [their] property.’” *Id.* at *14 (*quoting Sherman v. Town of Chester*, 752 F.3d 554, 565 (2d Cir. 2014)). Ultimately, the court decided that the plaintiffs had not “quantified the precise economic impact” that the executive orders had on their property. Auracle, 2020 WL 4558682, at *15. As to the second factor, investment-backed expectations, “the purpose [of this Penn Central factor] is to limit recovery to owners who could demonstrate that they bought their property in reliance on a state of affairs that

did not include the challenged regulatory regime.” Allen v. Cuomo, 100 F.3d 253, 262 (2d Cir. 1996). In Auracle, “the Executive Orders merely ‘regulate[] the terms under which the [Plaintiffs] may use the property as previously planned,’ during a global pandemic.” 2020 WL 4558682, at *15 (*quoting Fed. Home Loan Mortg. Corp. v. N.Y. State Div. of Hous. & Cmty. Renewal*, 83 F.3d 45, 48 (2d Cir. 1996)). Finally, the court determined that the final factor, the character of the governmental action, also weighed “against a finding that Plaintiffs have suffered a regulatory taking, because the Executive Orders are ‘part of a public program adjusting the benefits and burdens of economic life to promote the common good.’” Auracle, 2020 WL 4558682, at *16 (*quoting Sherman*, 752 F.3d at 565). See Connolly, 475 U.S. at 223 (“Given the propriety of the governmental power to regulate, it cannot be said that the Takings Clause is violated whenever the legislation requires one person to use his or her assets for the benefit of another.”).

Even more recently, two New York courts have addressed this taking issue as it pertains to emergency orders related to COVID-19. In Lebanon Valley Auto Racing Corp. v. Cuomo, 2020 WL 4596921 (N.D.N.Y. Aug. 11, 2020), plaintiffs, a New York race track, asserted that defendants violated the Fifth Amendment, among other things, by enacting an executive order which restricted how Plaintiffs’ businesses operate during COVID-19. While the race track was allowed to host competitors, spectators were restricted. The court first concluded that the alleged taking was non-categorical, stating that “[i]t defies common sense to conclude ‘no productive or economically beneficial use of [Plaintiffs’] land is permitted’ simply because that land cannot currently be used as a racetrack with spectators.” Lebanon Valley, 2020 WL 4596921, at *7, n.5. See

Kabrovski v. City of Rochester, 149 F. Supp. 3d 413, 425 (W.D.N.Y. 2015) (A taking “does not occur merely because a property owner is prevented from making the most financially beneficial use of a property”). After concluding that the alleged taking was non-categorical, the court looked to the Penn Central factors. Ultimately, the court determined that Plaintiffs failed to “adequately plead interference with investment-backed expectations, and the character of the governmental action heavily favor[ed] dismissal.” Lebanon Valley, 2020 WL 4596921, at *9.

In Luke’s Catering Service, LLC v. Cuomo, 2020 WL 5425008, at *2 (W.D.N.Y. Sept. 10, 2020), the plaintiffs consisted of event, banquet, and catering facilities which serve as private venues for various events and large gatherings and are considered “non-essential” businesses and subject to a 50-person limitation under an Executive Order. The court concluded first that a “categorical claim would [] fail, since Plaintiffs admit that they are not precluded from all economically beneficial uses of their property.”⁶ Id. at *12. In determining that a non-categorical regulatory takings claim was also likely to fail, the court stated that, “[f]irst, the Executive Orders are temporary and do not preclude all economic use of Plaintiffs’ property,” “[s]econd, although Plaintiffs’ investment-backed expectations are surely disrupted by the 50-person limitation, the Executive Orders are ‘a negative restriction rather than an affirmative exploitation by the state,’” and third, “the State ‘does not physically invade or permanently appropriate any of [Plaintiffs’] assets for its own use.” Id. “Rather, the character of the government action

⁶ “Plaintiffs elsewhere concede that the Executive Orders do not preclude them from hosting events of 50 or fewer people, and in fact, several Plaintiffs admit that they are scheduled to host such events.” Luke’s Catering, 2020 WL 5425008, at *12.

here is a temporary and proper exercise of the police power to protect the health and safety of the community, which weighs against a taking.” Id.

Looking to this persuasive case law, there was no physical taking in the present case.⁷ Therefore, the court must determine whether a regulatory taking occurred under Lucas or Penn Central. The court first looks to Lucas. The rule articulated in Lucas applies only “to regulations that completely deprive an owner of all economically beneficial us[e] of [their] property.” Lingle v. Chevron U.S.A. Inc., 544 U.S. 528, 538 (2005). Defendants assert that there is a “total regulatory taking” under the criteria outlined in Lucas. In so stating, Defendants point to Alger v. Department of Labor and Industry, 2006 VT 115, 181 Vt. 309 (2006). In Alger, residents of an apartment building which the Vermont Department of Labor and Industry attempted to close for longstanding housing code violations argued that such closure was “an unconstitutional taking of property without due process or just compensation”. Id. ¶ 1. Like the present case, state actions closed or attempted to close a building. However, that appears to be where the similarities end. In Alger, the Court acknowledged that while “Vermont law allows a tenant to remain in a dwelling after a landlord’s violation of the warranty of habitability...[t]his does not mean [] that tenants are entitled to remain in a building when doing so threatens the surrounding community, as in cases where occupancy of the building poses a fire hazard.” Id. ¶ 32. Accordingly, the Court determined that, “to the extent plaintiffs’ claims challenge the Department’s ultimate decision to order that their

⁷ Defendants confirm in their memo in opposition that they are not alleging a physical taking. Rather, they are asserting a “total regulatory taking” as outlined in Lucas v. South Carolina Coastal Council, 505 U.S. 1003, 1014 (1992), or, in the alternative, a Fifth Amendment taking under the factors outlined in Penn Central.

homes be vacated or their utility service be terminated, their allegations do not state valid takings claims.”⁸ Id. Rather, the Court looked to the Department’s knowledge of the code violations and their continued failure to act until the removal of tenants was required, stating that if plaintiffs could prove that “[b]ut for the Department’s failure to act, there would have been no nuisance to abate, and plaintiffs’ property would not have been taken,” plaintiffs would be entitled to just compensation.⁹ Id. ¶ 35. This is drastically different from the present case, where the state took swift action to contain the spread of COVID-19, by temporarily closing businesses and providing restrictions throughout the State of Vermont.

Defendants appear to rely on Alger for the argument that a temporary total loss of an economically beneficial use of their property is compensable. In holding that the lower court’s dismissal of plaintiffs’ taking claims was inappropriate, the Alger Court looked to both Lucas and First English Evangelical Lutheran Church of Glendale v. County of Los Angeles, noting that “the loss need not be permanent; a temporary taking of property can be compensable.” Alger, 2006 VT 115, ¶ 30 (citing First English, 482

⁸ Ultimately, the Court “agree[d] with the Department that the isolated act of ordering a building vacated cannot be characterized as an unconstitutional taking without just compensation, or as a taking without due process, when the order to vacate is necessary to eliminate an imminent threat of harm.” Nevertheless, the Court held that the lower court’s dismissal “on these grounds was premature” because although “plaintiffs’ complaint does not state a due process claim, the facts alleged were sufficient to raise the question of whether the Department’s alleged failures to act led to the destruction of plaintiffs’ leaseholds without compensation.” Alger, 2006 VT 115, ¶ 27.

⁹ The issue of whether a nuisance is a compensable taking was discussed heavily in Alger. “[A]n exercise of the police power to abate a public nuisance, and specifically, to abate a fire hazard, is not a compensable taking.” Alger, ¶ 31 (citing Eno v. City of Burlington, 125 Vt. 8, 13 (1965) (“A fire hazard is a nuisance and the abatement of such a nuisance is not the taking of property without due process or a taking for which compensation must be made.”)). While Plaintiff did state in its Reply Memorandum that the temporary closing of “businesses to abate the nuisance of a deadly disease spreading at an exponential rate is not a taking,” no other court has concluded that COVID-19 is a nuisance. As such, this court will not hold so.

U.S. 304 (1987)). However, Alger does not address the difference between a temporary and permanent loss, and whether the analysis would change anything. Moreover, Lucas did not deal with a temporary taking.¹⁰ Rather, the Court specifically stated that “Lucas had no reason to proceed on a ‘temporary taking’ theory at trial, or even to seek remand for that purpose prior to submission of the case to the South Carolina Supreme Court, since as the Act then read, the taking was unconditional and permanent.” 505 U.S. at 1012. Additionally, First English did not determine whether a temporary taking had occurred. 482 U.S. at 1033 (concurrency, J. Kennedy) (“Although we establish a framework for remand, moreover, we do not decide the ultimate question whether a temporary taking has occurred in this case.”).¹¹ While the Vermont Supreme Court has

¹⁰ In Lucas, the petitioner had purchased two residential lots with the intent of building single-family homes. 505 U.S. at 1003. At the time of the purchase, the lots were not subject to any building permit requirements. Id. However, two years later, the state enacted statutes which barred petitioner from “erecting any permanent habitable structures on his parcels. Id. Petitioner filed suit alleging that “the ban on construction deprived him of all ‘economically viable use’ of his property and therefore effected a ‘taking.’” Id. The Court then dove into the lengthy background and analysis of takings, resulting in the creation of a new scheme for categorical regulations” a categorical taking occurs “where [a] regulation denies all economically beneficial or productive use of land.” Id. at 1015. If a regulation denies all economically beneficial use, the state “may resist compensation only if the logically antecedent inquiry into the nature of the owner’s estate shows that the proscribed use interests were not part of his title to begin with.” Id. at 1027.

¹¹ “In fact, First English expressly disavowed any ruling on the merits of the takings issue because the California courts had decided the remedial question on the assumption that a taking had been alleged.” Tahoe-Sierra, 535 U.S. at 328-39. See First English, 482 U.S. at 312-313 (“We reject appellee’s suggestion that ... we must independently evaluate the adequacy of the complaint and resolve the takings claim on the merits before we can reach the remedial question”). The Court merely held that “where the government’s activities have already worked a taking of all use of property, no subsequent action by the government can relieve it of the duty to provide compensation for the period during which the taking was effective.” First English, 482 U.S. at 321. The Tahoe-Sierra Court went on to clarify the taking issue in First English:

In First English, 482 U.S. at 315, 318, 321, 107 S.Ct. 2378, the Court addressed the separate remedial question of how compensation is measured once a regulatory taking is established, but not the different and prior question whether the temporary regulation was in fact a taking. To the extent that the Court referenced the antecedent takings question, it recognized that a regulation temporarily denying an owner all use of her property might not constitute a taking if the denial was part of the State’s authority to enact safety

not made it clear that all alleged takings resulting from temporary regulations should be analyzed under the Penn Central framework, rather than Lucas, it is clear that a temporary taking is compensable.

As such, this court will look to the Lucas framework, and, if necessary, to Penn Central in determining whether a taking occurred. Defendants argue that the Executive Orders denied all economically beneficial or productive use of their property. However, Defendants could have pursued alternative business practices in order to financially compensate for the decrease in income, such as online fitness classes or instructional videos.¹² While Defendants would have likely been unable to avoid a decrease in income through online fitness classes or instructional videos, EO 01-20 did not completely deprive Defendants of all economic benefits of the fitness center business.

regulations, or if it were one of the normal delays in obtaining building permits, changes in zoning ordinances, variances, and the like. Thus, First English did not approve, and implicitly rejected, petitioners' categorical approach.

Tahoe-Sierra, 535 U.S. at 303. The Court went on to state that Lucas is also not

dispositive of the question presented. Its categorical rule—requiring compensation when a regulation permanently deprives an owner of “*all* economically beneficial uses” of his land, 505 U.S., at 1019, 112 S.Ct. 2886—does not answer the question whether a regulation prohibiting any economic use of land for 32 months must be compensated.

Tahoe, Sierra, 535 U.S. at 303. Tahoe-Sierra went on to hold that “the interest in ‘fairness and justice’ will be best served by relying on the familiar Penn Central approach when deciding cases [of temporary regulations], rather than by attempting to craft a new categorical rule.” Id. at 342.

¹² In response to Plaintiff's claim that Defendants could have instituted a video exercise program, Defendants argue that such a suggestion is nonsensical, as they only had a 72-hour notice before the business had to close in March. Additionally, Defendants claim that not only did the State forbade his employees from entering the premises, but Defendants lacked necessary video equipment to accommodate such video exercise programs. Such arguments are unpersuasive. Businesses across the country have had to adjust their business practices to accommodate closures and restrictions. Schools with limited funding had to provide on-line learning to students with short notice. Court systems, including the Vermont Judiciary, adjusted to accommodate tele-hearings. It does not follow that Defendants' only possible avenue to earn income was to allow in-person work outs.

This is in line with the aforementioned recent COVID-19 related cases, in which the courts determined the businesses did not lose all economically beneficial uses of their property.¹³ See PCG-SP Venture I LLC, 2020 WL 4344631, at *10 (“Plaintiff is free, for example, to sell food or beverages on the premises and engage in commercial construction or development of the Hotel.”). Accordingly, this court does not find that Defendants lost all beneficial use of their property, and thus a Lucas taking does not apply to the present case.

Looking to the Penn Central factors, Defendants’ assertion that EO 01-20 amounts to a taking requiring just compensation also fails. In TJM 64, Inc., 2020 WL 4352756, the court found that although the “first and second Penn Central factors support Plaintiffs, the third factor does not and outweighs the other two factors.” The plaintiffs’ ability to generate profits through on-site alcohol and food sales was completely suspended by the closure. “Such disastrous economic consequences favor a finding that the Closure Order constitutes a regulatory taking.” TJM 64, Inc., at *6. Similarly here, Defendants have lost the ability for in-person patronage at their gym. There is little question that this has had an economic impact on Defendants. In TJM 64, Inc., the court pointed to plaintiffs investments “in their businesses and properties for the purpose of owning and operating clubs, restaurants and bars and restaurants that derive their profits from in-person patronage” in determining that the COVID-19 related closures have interfered “in a significant way with Plaintiffs’ investment-backed expectations in their

¹³ Defendants point to Lucas, where the statutes prohibiting residential construction in Lucas did allow for some construction, including -small wooden decks, walkways, and fishing piers. Lucas, 505 U.S. at 1007. See S.C. Code Ann. § 48-39-250 et seq. Despite this “use” available, Defendants argue that the court rendered Lucas’s parcels “valueless.” However, as addressed above, the Supreme Court’s decision in Lucas did not render anything “valueless.” Rather, the Court referenced the state trial court’s finding that the ban rendered Lucas’s parcels “valueless.” Lucas, 505 U.S. at 1001. Accordingly, this argument is irrelevant.

properties.” Id. The same is true in the present case. There is no doubt that Defendants invested significantly into a gym that derived its profits from in-person patronage, and such investment expectations have been significantly interred with by the regulations.

While the first and second Penn Central factors support a finding that EO 01-20 constitutes a regulatory taking, the third factor does not. COVID-19 swept the country in a short period of time, forcing Governors and health officials to act quickly and diligently to protect the population. In TJM 64, Inc., the court determined that the COVID-19 closure order “was not for a ‘public use’ but was instead a valid exercise of the broad police powers bestowed upon state and local officials to prevent detrimental public harms by restricting Plaintiffs’ use of their property. It is unlikely that such action would require compensation under the Takings Clause.” 2020 WL 4352756, at *7. *See also* Auracle, 2020 WL 4558682, at *16 (concluding that the final factor also weighed “against a finding that Plaintiffs have suffered a regulatory taking because the Executive Orders are ‘part of a public program adjusting the benefits and burdens of economic lift to promote the common good’”) (*quoting* Sherman, 752 F.3d at 565). Defendants have provided no reason for this court to deviate from these cases and their rationale.

Additionally, holding that EO 01-20 resulted in a taking to businesses like Defendants could itself go against public policy. As addressed in TJM 64, Inc., labeling the executive order a taking

would require the state to compensate every individual or property owner whose property use was restricted for the purpose of protecting public health. This would severely limit the state’s especially broad police power in responding to a health emergency. Constraining such government actions would exceed the scope of the Takings Clause by “transform[ing] [the] principle [that ‘all property in this country is held under the implied obligation that the owner’s use of it shall not be injurious to the community’] to one that requires compensation whenever the state asserts its power to enforce it.” Keystone Bituminous Coal Ass’n v. DeBenedictis, 480 U.S. 470, 492, 107 S.Ct. 1232, 94 L.Ed.2d 472 (1987) (*quoting* Mugler v. Kansas, 123 U.S. 623, 665, 8 S.Ct. 273, 31 L.Ed. 205 (1887)).

TJM 64, Inc., 2020 WL 4352756, at *7. Accordingly, EO 01-20 does not constitute a regulatory taking requiring just compensation under the Penn Central factors.

Defendants' claims that the State, Governor and Attorney General violated Chapter 1, Article 2 of the Vermont Constitution and the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution thus fails.¹⁴

Finally, the State, Governor and Attorney General assert that the State is immune from claims for damages for loss of property under 20 V.S.A. § 20(a):

Except in the case of willful misconduct or gross negligence, the state, any of its agencies, [or] state employees as defined in 3 V.S.A. § 1101, . . . involved in emergency management activities shall not be liable for the death of or any injury to persons or loss or damage to property resulting from an emergency management service or response activity, including the development of local emergency plans and the response to those plans. Nothing in this section shall exclude the state, its agencies, political subdivisions, or employees from the protections and rights provided in chapter 189 of Title 12.

20 V.S.A. § 20(a). However, the Vermont Supreme Court has previously held that the doctrine of immunity from liability for governmental activities “does not apply where the injury complained of is the taking of private property for public use without compensation.” Griswold v. Weathersfield Town School Dist., 117 Vt. 224 226 (1952) (citing cases and other authority). Accordingly, the State, Governor and Attorney General are not immune from the state law taking claims.

¹⁴ Plaintiff and Counter-Defendants also asserts that this claim should be dismissed as the Governor was not acting pursuant to the emergency takings statute. Rather, 20 V.S.A. § 8(b)(1), § 9, and § 11(6) provided the necessary powers for the Governor to declare a state of emergency. Closing in-person businesses to slow the undetectable spread of a deadly disease falls squarely within the power to “order the evacuation of persons . . . working within . . . an area for which a state of emergency has been proclaimed,” as authorized by § 9(9). However, EO 01-20 specifically refers to § 11 in its list of authorizing statutes.

20 V.S.A. § 11

On March 13, 2020, Governor Phil Scott issued Executive Order 01-20, declaring a state of emergency in response to COVID-19, as authorized by the Constitution of the State of Vermont, Chapter II, Section 20 and under 20 V.S.A. §§ 8, 9 and 11 and Chapter 29.¹⁵ While Executive Order 01-20 was originally set to expire by April 15, the Governor has extended the state of emergency approximately every thirty days since it was first issued. In addition, the Governor has issued a series of addenda and directives related to EO 01-20. On March 21, 2020, Addendum 4 was issued, directing all “close-contact businesses,” including “gymnasiums, fitness centers and similar exercise

¹⁵ <https://governor.vermont.gov/sites/scott/files/documents/EO%2001-20%20Declaration%20of%20State%20of%20Emergency%20in%20Response%20to%20COVID-19%20and%20National%20Guard%20Call-Out.pdf>.

See 20 V.S.A. § 20(a),(b):

(a) The governor shall have general direction and control of the emergency management agency and shall be responsible for the carrying out of the provisions of this chapter.

(b) In performing the duties under this chapter, the governor is further authorized and empowered:

(1) Orders, rules and regulations. To make, amend and rescind the necessary orders, rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this chapter with due consideration of the plans of the federal government.

See also 20 V.S.A. § 9(9):

Subject to the provisions of this chapter, in the event of an all-hazards event in or directed upon the United States or Canada that causes or may cause substantial damage or injury to persons or property within the bounds of the State in any manner, the Governor may proclaim a state of emergency within the entire State or any portion or portions of the State. Thereafter, the Governor shall have and may exercise for as long as the Governor determines the emergency to exist the following additional powers within such area or areas:

(9) To order the evacuation of persons living or working within all or a portion of an area for which a state of emergency has been proclaimed.

facilities, hair salons and barbers, nail salons, spas and tattoo parlors” to “cease all in-person operations.”¹⁶

Defendants argue that they are entitled to compensation under 20 V.S.A. § 11 as a result of Plaintiff and Counter-Defendants’ alleged taking of its lawful business. In pertinent part, 20 V.S.A. § 11 provides the following:

In the event of an all-hazards event, the governor may exercise any or all of the following additional powers:

(3) To seize, take, or condemn property for the protection of the public or at the request of the president, or his or her authorized representatives including:

- (A) All means of transportation;
- (B) All stocks of fuel of whatever nature;
- (C) Food, clothing, equipment, materials, medicines, and all supplies;
- (D) Facilities, including buildings and plants; provided that neither this nor any other authority in this chapter shall be deemed to authorize the eviction of a householder and his or her family from their own home.

(5) To make compensation for the property so seized, taken, or condemned on the following basis:

Any owner of property of which possession has been taken under the provisions of this chapter to whom no award has been made or who is dissatisfied with the amount awarded him or her by the governor, may file a petition in the superior court within the county wherein the property was situated at the time of taking to have the amount to which he or she is entitled by way of damages or compensation determined, and thereafter either the petitioner or the state shall have the right to have the amount of such damages or compensation fixed after hearing by three disinterested appraisers appointed by said court, and who shall operate under substantive and administrative procedure to be established by the superior judges. If the petitioner is dissatisfied with the award of the appraisers, he or she may file an appeal therefrom in said court and thereafter have a trial by jury to determine the amount of such damages or compensation in such manner as the court shall provide. The court costs of a proceeding brought under this section by the owner of the property shall be paid by the state; and the fees and expenses of any attorney for such owner shall also be paid by the state after allowances by the court wherein the petition is brought in such amount as the court in its discretion shall fix. The statute of limitations shall not apply to proceedings brought by such owners of property as above provided for and during the time

¹⁶<https://governor.vermont.gov/sites/scott/files/documents/ADDENDUM%20TO%20EXECUTIVE%20ORDER%2001-20.pdf>.

that any court having jurisdiction of such proceedings shall be prevented from holding its usual and stated sessions due to conditions resulting from emergencies as herein referred to.

20 V.S.A. § 11(3),(5).

The State, Governor and Attorney General argue that the Governor's order is a generally applicable law aimed at protecting the public health and welfare, is a proper exercise of the State's police power, and does not result in a governmental taking. As this statute does not state any distinctions between a taking under 20 V.S.A. § 11(3),(5) and a taking under the Vermont and United States Constitution, this court must look to the plethora of case law previously mentioned, which, for reasons already explained, compel the conclusion that the actions of the State, Governor and Attorney General do not amount to a governmental taking that requires the payment of compensation. Therefore, the Defendants have no actionable claim for compensation for their alleged losses under 20 V.S.A. § 11.¹⁷

42 U.S.C. § 1983 and § 1985

Having concluded that the State, Governor and Attorney General did not violate Defendants' constitutional or statutory rights, the court will only briefly address Defendants' § 1983 claim and the immunity claims asserted by the Governor and Attorney General.

¹⁷ Defendants points to the use of the term "condemn" in support of the assertion that 20 V.S.A 11(3) applies to the circumstances of the present case. According to Defendants, the Vermont Supreme Court has "repeatedly used the term 'inverse condemnation' to mean a taking other than a physical invasion of private property by the government," citing to Ondovchik, 2010 VT 35, and Ridge Line, Inc. v. United States, 346 F.3d 1346 (Fed. Cir. 2003). However, Defendants fail to provide any case law or rationale for why EO 01-20 would be considered an inverse condemnation when it is not considered a taking. Accordingly, this argument also fails.

Defendants assert a civil rights claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and 42 U.S.C § 1985¹⁸, seeking damages against Governor Scott and Attorney General Donovan in their personal capacities, for allegedly depriving Defendants of their property without due process of law, in violation of the Fifth Amendment, by closing down the fitness center and refusing to compensate Defendants for the taking or condemnation, as required by 20 V.S.A. § 11 and the Vermont and United States Constitutions. 42 U.S.C. § 1983 provides that:

Every person who, under color of any statute, ordinance, regulation, custom, or usage, of any State or Territory or the District of Columbia, subjects, or causes to be subjected, any citizen of the United States or other person within the jurisdiction thereof to the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws, shall be liable to the party injured in an action at law, suit in equity, or other proper proceeding for redress, except that in any action brought against a judicial officer for an act or omission taken in such officer's judicial capacity, injunctive relief shall not be granted unless a declaratory decree was violated or declaratory relief was unavailable. For the purposes of this section, any Act of Congress applicable exclusively to the

¹⁸ Defendants also assert a civil action under § 1985(3).

If two or more persons in any State or Territory conspire or go in disguise on the highway or on the premises of another, for the purpose of depriving, either directly or indirectly, any person or class of persons of the equal protection of the laws, or of equal privileges and immunities under the laws; or for the purpose of preventing or hindering the constituted authorities of any State or Territory from giving or securing to all persons within such State or Territory the equal protection of the laws; or if two or more persons conspire to prevent by force, intimidation, or threat, any citizen who is lawfully entitled to vote, from giving his support or advocacy in a legal manner, toward or in favor of the election of any lawfully qualified person as an elector for President or Vice President, or as a Member of Congress of the United States; or to injure any citizen in person or property on account of such support or advocacy; in any case of conspiracy set forth in this section, if one or more persons engaged therein do, or cause to be done, any act in furtherance of the object of such conspiracy, whereby another is injured in his person or property, or deprived of having and exercising any right or privilege of a citizen of the United States, the party so injured or deprived may have an action for the recovery of damages occasioned by such injury or deprivation, against any one or more of the conspirators.

42 U.S.C. § 1985(3). Defendants, however, do not allege a conspiracy or an act in furtherance of the conspiracy. In fact, other than listing § 1985 on the counter-claim, Defendants fail to address the claim at all. Thus, this claim is dismissed.

District of Columbia shall be considered to be a statute of the District of Columbia.

42 U.S.C. § 1983. See Williams v. State, 156 Vt. 42, 47, 589 A.2d 840, 844 (1990)

(“[The statute, 42 U.S.C. § 1983,] provides a private remedy for those alleging abridgment of federal rights by ‘persons’ acting ‘under color of’ state law ... [and was] intended to provide a federal forum for those seeking vindication of federal rights”).

“Claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 may be brought in either federal or state court; however, § 1983 may not be used to support claims for deprivation of state constitutional rights.”

Brown v. State, 2018 VT 1, ¶ 13, 206 Vt. 394 (citing Bock v. Gold, 2008 VT 81, ¶ 10, 184 Vt. 575, 959 A.2d 990 (mem.)). Accordingly, Defendants’ § 1983 claim would only apply to the alleged violation of the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution.

Because the court has determined that the Defendants’ Counterclaim fails to state a viable claim that the Fifth Amendment was violated by the EO 01-20, Defendants’ § 1983 claim must fail for this reason alone. Moreover, for the reasons set forth below, the Governor and Attorney General would be immune from such a claim, even if it were viable.

Attorney General Donovan asserts that as a prosecutor he has absolute immunity against the Defendants’ § 1983 action for quasi-judicial acts. “Immunity is a defense to § 1983 actions for damages against certain officials sued in their individual capacity for damages. Those acting in a legislative, judicial or prosecutorial capacity are absolutely immune, irrespective of whether they act in good faith.” Billado v. Appel, 165 Vt. 482, 486 (1996). “[P]rosecutors are protected by absolute immunity for quasi-judicial acts, which the Supreme Court has defined as those ‘intimately associated with the judicial phase of the criminal process,’” O’Connor v. Donovan, 2012 VT 27, ¶ 11, 191 Vt. 412 (quoting Imbler v. Pachtman, 424 U.S. 409, 430 (1976)). Applying this standard, the

Vermont Supreme Court concluded in Levinsky v. Diamond, 151 Vt. 178 (1989) “that the prosecutor defendants were all protected by absolute immunity for their actions ‘in filing the ... charges’ as well as for the allegedly unlawful subpoenaing of records, which ‘involved an activity legally sanctioned as part of the investigative process, a process necessary to the effective operation of the prosecutors’ office.’” O’Connor, 2012 VT 27, ¶ 12 (quoting Levinsky, 151 Vt. at 193–94) (partially overruled on other grounds by Muzzy v. State, 155 Vt. 279 (1990)).¹⁹ Although this is not a criminal prosecution, Donovan is nevertheless entitled to absolute immunity because his alleged actions, in pursuing this enforcement action, are “functionally comparable” to that of a prosecutor. See Li v. Lorenzo, 712 Fed.Appx. 21, 23 (2d Cir. 2017 (holding that two attorneys who served as counsel to a state disciplinary committee were entitled to absolute immunity because their actions on behalf of the committee were “functionally equivalent” to that of a prosecutor). Accordingly, Attorney General Donovan does have absolute immunity against Defendants’ § 1983 action. Moreover, for the reasons set forth below, he would be entitled to qualified immunity, even if he did not enjoy absolute immunity from Defendants’ counterclaim.

Governor Scott argues that Defendants’ claims against him for damages in his personal capacity are barred by qualified immunity because Defendants cannot show that he violated a clearly established right. “Other public officials and employees have qualified immunity that protects them if they act in good faith. Under the objective test of

¹⁹ “It is unlikely . . . that Muzzy’s intent was to overrule—in a brief footnote—Levinsky’s specific and carefully constructed holding as to the Attorney General. It is more likely that, in purporting to overrule Levinsky ‘to the extent that [it] . . . considers prosecutors acting in their quasi-judicial role as executive rather than judicial officers, . . . Muzzy was referring only to states’ attorneys.” O’Connor v. Donovan, 2012 VT 27, ¶ 18.

good faith adopted by the Supreme Court, government officials performing discretionary functions are immune “insofar as their conduct does not violate clearly established statutory or constitutional rights of which a reasonable person would have known.”

Billado, 165 Vt. at 487 (quoting Harlow v. Fitzgerald, 457 U.S. 800, 818 (1982)).

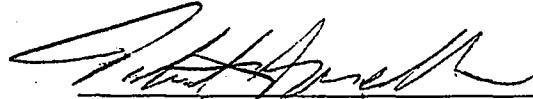
Qualified immunity protects “all but the plainly incompetent or those who knowingly violate the law.” Malley v. Briggs, 475 U.S. 335, 341 (1986). The Supreme Court has held that qualified immunity can be defeated if an official “‘knew or reasonably should have known that the action he took within his sphere of official responsibility would violate the constitutional rights of the [plaintiff], or if he took the action with the malicious intention to cause a deprivation of constitutional rights or other injury....”

Wood v. Strickland, 420 U.S. 308, 322 (1975) (emphasis added). Here, Defendants have alleged no facts which would support the conclusion that Governor Scott or Attorney General Donovan either violated a clearly established right or knew or should have known he was violating such a right. See Jacobson v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 197 U.S. 11, 27 (1905) (“[A] community has the right to protect itself against an epidemic of disease which threatens the safety of its members.”); McCarthy, 2020 WL 3286530, at *3 (noting that “courts across the country...have overwhelmingly upheld COVID-related state and local restrictions on gatherings over the last few month, citing Jacobson”). Therefore, Governor Scott and Attorney General Donovan are immune from Defendants’ suit.

Order

For these reasons, the V.R.C.P. 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss Defendants’ Counterclaim for failure to state a claim is *granted*.

SO ORDERED this 24th day of September, 2020.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert A. Mello", written over a horizontal line.

Robert A. Mello, Superior Judge

Attachment D

Nov. 10, 2020 Compliance Letter

THOMAS J. DONOVAN, JR.
ATTORNEY GENERAL

JOSHUA R. DIAMOND
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

SARAH E.B. LONDON
CHIEF ASST. ATTORNEY GENERAL



TEL: (802) 828-3171

<http://www.ago.vermont.gov>

STATE OF VERMONT
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
109 STATE STREET
MONTPELIER, VT
05609-1001

November 10, 2020

The UPS Store
Att: Mr. Michael Desautels
137 Main Street
Newport, VT 05855

Dear Mr. Desautels,

The State of Vermont has declared a public health emergency. As a consequence the Governor has issued orders to keep Vermonters safe and healthy and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (also known as the “coronavirus”). You are receiving this letter because we received a question or complaint about the health or safety of your delivery of services. We are writing now to verify your compliance.

Commercial activity may pose an immediate risk to the public health by increasing exposure risk to COVID-19 if health and safety protocols – including and especially the use of protective equipment (gloves, masks, etc.) and social distancing – are not observed. The Office of the Vermont Attorney General advises you to immediately follow all safety and health protocols in the delivery of any services you or The UPS Store of Newport, Vermont provide.

Governor Scott has issued Addendum 2 to Executive Order 01-20 mandating the use of masks indoors and outdoors (with limited exceptions), and especially in congregant settings or where social distancing is not possible.¹ Specifically, the Order declares: “Vermonters shall wear masks or cloth facial coverings over their nose and mouth any time they are in public spaces, indoors or outdoors, where they come in contact with others from outside their households, especially in congregate settings, and where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least six feet.” If you have questions about what qualifies as a covered activity, please contact the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. If you have questions about what qualifies as health and safety protocols, please contact the Vermont Department of Health.

¹<https://governor.vermont.gov/sites/scott/files/documents/ADDENDUM%202%20TO%20AMENDED%20AND%20RESTATED%20EXECUTIVE%20ORDER%20NO.%2001-20.pdf>

Businesses must observe health and safety protocols – every time for every employee and consumer. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 802-279-5496 if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Curtis', written in a cursive style.

Christopher J. Curtis
Chief, Public Protection Division

cc: The UPS Store, Inc.
6060 Cornerstone Court West
San Diego, CA 92121

Attachment E

Feb. 17, 2021 Cease-and-Desist Letter



State of Vermont, Office of the Attorney General
109 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05609-1001
802-828-3171
ago.vermont.gov

Thomas J. Donovan, Jr., Attorney General
Joshua R. Diamond, Deputy Attorney General
Christopher J. Curtis, Chief, Public Protection Division

February 17, 2021

The UPS Store
Att: Mr. Andre “Mike” Desautels
137 Main Street
Newport, VT 05855

BY HAND DELIVERY AND USPS FIRST CLASS MAIL

Dear Mr. Desautels,

This letter requires your immediate attention. You and/or the UPS Store must immediately comply with the Governor’s COVID-19 Executive Order(s). This is the second notice we have issued to you requesting compliance with the State of Vermont’s health and safety orders.

These orders are in place to ensure commercial activity may continue, but safely, and without risk of transmitting the virus. The health and safety of you, your employees, your friends and neighbors all depends on each of us doing our part. Yet, we continue to receive reports that you refuse to comply with basic health and safety requirements – even as the state is poised to turn the corner with public health measures that work, and with increased access to vaccinations. Warmer weather and more opportunities to be outside should also lead to declining caseloads. You can help make a difference – and operate your business safely for your employees and your customers.

Commercial activity may pose an immediate risk to the public health by increasing exposure risk to COVID-19 if health and safety protocols – including and especially the use of protective equipment (gloves, masks, etc.) and social distancing – are not observed. That is why the Office of the Vermont Attorney General advises you to immediately follow all safety and health protocols in the delivery of any services you or The UPS Store provides.

Governor Scott has issued Addendum 2 to Executive Order 01-20 mandating the use of masks indoors and outdoors (with limited exceptions), and especially in congregant settings or where social distancing is not possible.¹ Specifically, the Order declares: “Vermonters shall wear masks or cloth facial coverings over their nose and mouth any time they are in public spaces, indoors or outdoors, where they come in contact with others from outside their households, especially in congregate settings, and where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least six feet.”

In addition to this general mask mandate, businesses must observe health and safety protocols – every time for every employee and consumer. Since at least April 17, 2020, all employees of Vermont businesses have been required to wear cloth face coverings when in the presence of others.² While there are exemptions from the mask mandate for individuals in public spaces, the mandatory health

¹<https://governor.vermont.gov/sites/scott/files/documents/ADDENDUM%202%20TO%20AMENDED%20AND%20RESTATED%20EXECUTIVE%20ORDER%20N.O.%2001-20.pdf>

² https://governor.vermont.gov/sites/scott/files/documents/ADDENDUM%2010%20TO%20EXECUTIVE%20ORDER%2001-20_0.pdf

and safety requirements for businesses established by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development require that employees wear a mask or utilize an alternative approved safety measure such as a translucent shield under certain circumstances.³ Please do not hesitate to contact our office at the number above if you have questions. If you have questions about what qualifies as a covered activity, please contact the [Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development](#). If you have questions about what qualifies as health and safety protocols, please contact the [Vermont Department of Health](#).

We recognize the importance of being able to engage in commercial activity. At the same time, we all share a duty as citizens to help keep our friends, neighbors, employees, and customers safe. Wearing masks, wiping down surfaces and maintaining social distancing allows us to meet both of those needs. With vaccines now in distribution we may be close to putting this pandemic behind us. But we need your (and every Vermonter's help) to keep infection rates low. If we work together, we can end this pandemic and avoid health and safety problems or further disruption to the business community.

Thank you for taking immediate action to do your part and comply with these important health and safety measures. You should know that law enforcement will be following up periodically to ensure compliance, and that any failure to comply with the Executive Order and the general mask mandate may lead to enforcement action in court.⁴

Sincerely,



Christopher J. Curtis
Chief, Public Protection Division
Office of the Attorney General

³ <https://accd.vermont.gov/news/update-new-work-safe-additions-be-smart-stay-safe-order>: "Employees must wear face coverings over their nose and mouth when in the presence of others. In the case of retail cashiers, a translucent shield or 'sneeze guard' is acceptable in lieu of a mask if the employee works alone and does not interact with customers outside the work station."

⁴ A violation of an emergency executive order is a criminal misdemeanor and punishable by imprisonment of up to six months and a criminal fine of up to \$500. 20 V.S.A. § 24. A violation of an emergency executive order may also be punished by civil penalties of up to \$1000 per violation per day. 20 V.S.A. § 40(b). And the Attorney General may pursue a restraining order against your business to ensure it stays closed. 20 V.S.A. § 40(c).