

SALISBURY AREA COVID-19 RECOVERY TASK FORCE



March 18, 2020

Governor Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.

President of the Senate William C. Ferguson, IV

Speaker of the House of Delegates Adrienne A. Jones

Respected Maryland Leaders,

First and foremost, on behalf of the undersigned, we thank each of you for the hard work you are putting in on behalf of the citizens of Maryland. This public health crisis, and the resulting financial stress it's causing on businesses across our great state, is unprecedented. We want you to know that we are most appreciative of all your collective efforts. We know this is not easy.

On Tuesday, here in Salisbury, we held an Emergency Mayor's Business Roundtable. Our goal was simple: to share information, and to listen and attempt to address the concerns of our business community. The event was held in the conference room of a local commercial real estate firm, and more than 1000 people tuned into the broadcast, viewed across three social media platforms. It was a serious and successful meeting.

As a direct result of that meeting, and with the full support of all of the names on this letter, we write you today with some thoughts and some requests.

One thing that was clear at our Roundtable yesterday is that this crisis doesn't pose future impacts or threats. The impacts are here. NOW. Our greater Salisbury Metropolitan Area community is feeling it. We are Maryland's second-largest economy and second-most populous metropolitan area, as well as one of the state's most viable rural areas. That diversity is our strength. That said, our economic diversity is being tested. Some may thrive in the days and months ahead, while others may "just get by" and many others, still, will truly suffer some devastating economic effects.

We are proud to say that our businesses are coordinating and communicating better than ever. Our local governments are taking decisive action. Yesterday's Roundtable was an example of that.

We support Comptroller Peter Franchot's call to dip into the State's Rainy Day Fund to provide a minimum of \$500 million for small businesses that will be critically impacted by the worsening COVID-19 pandemic. We believe that Maryland's local independent businesses are

the lifeblood of our state's economy, and the pillars of our communities. We heard from many of them during our Roundtable discussion yesterday. While there are most certainly signs of positive economic activity, particularly in the manufacturing base, there are significant signs of distress, as well.

We believe that the actions that have been proposed to date simply are not enough. To survive the next 45 to 60 days, these businesses need cash to pay their employees, their vendors, their landlords, and their banks. We believe it is imperative that the State of Maryland borrow, at a minimum, \$500 million from its Rainy Day Fund and push it out the door as quickly as humanly possible to these business owners. Quite honestly, our local businesses, particularly our bars and restaurants, and our small retailers, don't even know how they're going to survive the next few days without customers or cash flow.


Small Business Administration loans are well intentioned, of course, but they are not nearly sufficient. These local businesses do not need loans, they need cash. We heard some dire predictions yesterday at our Roundtable. We are worried that some of our small businesses are very close to closing their doors. And we know that every time a small business closes in a community, the impact is severe and far ranging. The decimation of our small business sector in the State of Maryland and in the United States would, we believe, catapult us into the worst economic climate since the Great Depression.

As we showed yesterday at our Roundtable, we will spare no effort in our advocating for this immediate measure from the State. This letter is a reflection of a unanimous decision made at our Roundtable discussion. Our Roundtable group will be meeting every Tuesday at 2 PM. We feel it is imperative that we meet, and imperative that you act.

Very Respectfully,




Jacob Day, Mayor
City of Salisbury



Mike Dunn, President/CEO
Greater Salisbury Committee



Bill Chambers, President/CEO
Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce



Dr. Steve Leonard, CEO
Peninsula Regional Health System




Bill McCain, Board Member
YMCA of the Chesapeake
Wicomico County Councilman At-Large



Dave Ryan, Executive Director
Salisbury Wicomico Economic Development



Wayne Strausburg, Director of Administration
Wicomico County



Dr. Donna Hanlin, Superintendent
Wicomico County Public Schools



Brent Miller, Executive Managing Director
SVN Miller Commercial Real Estate



Laura Soper, Business Development Director
City of Salisbury