



To Lead, Advocate and Connect as the Voice of Business

Special Appropriation: COVID-19 Response Reopen Montgomery

July 7, 2020

Support

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the \$14 million special appropriation for Support for COVID-19 Response Reopen Montgomery. My name is Tricia Swanson and I am VP of Government Relations at the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce.

First and foremost, I want to applaud the leadership that this Council has shown over the last 19 weeks. The Chamber has sincerely appreciated working with each of you to get our small businesses and nonprofits some of the resources they have needed to navigate this global pandemic and now, assist them in reopening their doors and getting some of our county back to work in a safe and responsible way. I want to particularly thank Councilmember Friedson who has regularly been on the phone with Chambers and local businesses soliciting feedback to ensure the creation of a program that will help our businesses.

I would like to take a few moments to speak to the specifics of the Reopen Montgomery program, particularly following the PHED committee discussion yesterday.

- **Timeliness** is of the upmost importance for this funding. We believe that it is the goal of the County Executive's Office to launch this initiative on July 27th – that is nearly 3 weeks from now. Businesses have already started reopening and need funds now. Further, to then have a two-week open application process – we are looking at mid-August before a business is even notified they are chosen.
- **Funding now versus Phase 3** – we understand the delicate balance in getting funding out now versus holding some for those businesses who can reopen in Phase 3. However, what we do not want is unallocated funds like we saw with the PHEG grant.
- **Sample Application** – the Chamber did appreciate hearing there would be a full sample application put on the website prior to opening the actual application. This was an issue with PHEG – businesses didn't know how to fully prepare – they could only see certain pieces of the application as they were applying
- **Eligibility** – the Chamber believes this was flushed out in committee but it is incredibly important that businesses who are awarded this funding have the ability to seek additional state and federal funds to support their reopening, as well. Further, those that received the PHEG grant should be able to receive the Reopening grant.

As always, communication is vital. The Chamber is hosting a webinar this week with Councilmember Friedson to share information with our members about who/how to apply and I know the other local Chambers will be sharing information as well. It is pivotal that the CE office communication clearly who/how/when to apply and to use the Chambers to amplify that message.

Thank you.