



To Lead, Advocate, and Connect as the Voice of Business

May 29, 2020

The Honorable Ben Cardin
United States Senate
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cardin and Senator Van Hollen:

On behalf of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce (MCCC), the Board of Directors and member companies, we appreciate all that you have done for the Montgomery County and MetroMaryland business community through your policies and actions to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. We understand these are unprecedented times and hearing from the business community is imperative as you craft policies to respond to this global pandemic. As such, MCCC submits the following recommendations.

The Payroll Protection Program (PPP) has been a tremendously beneficial to many of our small businesses and the following changes should be implemented to ensure PPP's effectiveness:

- Lengthen the time that PPP recipients can expend the money received through the program from 8 weeks to 24 weeks.
- Eliminate the problematic 75% payroll/25% expense forgiveness ratios.
- Expand eligible expenses to allow businesses to use the PPP money to cover interest on any debts incurred before COVID-19, as well as insurance, workers' compensation and other necessary operating expenses.
- Repeal the provisions that exclude recipients of PPP from receiving payroll tax deferral and employee retention tax credit.
- Lengthen the two-year maturity of the loan to five years, reducing the size of each individual repayment.

Further, beyond these needed PPP recommendations, we hope that you will enact the following vital policies:

- **Liability:** As the crisis abates, businesses need a safe harbor when reopening and resuming activities. If a business follows the regulations set by federal, state, and local government in good faith, then they should not be liable if someone an employee, customer, visitor or guest contracts COVID- 19. Liability should only be applied in the case of gross negligence.
- **Unemployment:** Prohibit all unemployment claims made during the COVID-19 crisis from being counted against an employer's experience rating
- Retain changes to **Net Operating Loss** carryback that were included in the CARES Act.

- **Broadband Access:** Montgomery County still has significant internet and broadband deserts. As such, significant funding for broadband development must be to ensure the continuation of online learning and virtual instruction and the ability to telework and access to telemedicine.
- **Tourism:** Establish a \$250 billion Tourism/Hospitality Stabilization fund at the U.S. Department of Treasury to help severely impacted, financially distressed businesses & tourism-based economies. The tourism/hospitality industry and tourism-dependent communities have been hit particularly hard by the crisis and to survive and recover need dedicated resources and no-interest loans.

We understand that Congress is working hard to protect our communities and assist businesses. However, the shut-down has been devastating for our economies and many businesses are hanging on by a thread. The next phase of coronavirus response legislation must consider the length of time the shut-down has lasted and the unforeseen impacts facing our communities and businesses.

On behalf of our business community, workers and their families, we thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Godwin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter being a large, stylized 'G'.

Georgette "Gigi" Godwin
President and CEO