



THE GREATER BETHESDA

CHAMBER of COMMERCE

Smart Business, Bright Future

7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1204
Bethesda, MD 20814

T (301) 652-4900 F (301) 657-1973

gitaliano@greaterbethesdachamber.org

www.greaterbethesdachamber.org

**TESTIMONY OF GINANNE M. ITALIANO
THE GREATER BETHESDA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
SPECIAL APPROPRIATION TO THE FISCAL YEAR FY21 OPERATING BUDGET
MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND, SUPPORT FOR COVID-19
RESPONSE - REOPEN MONTGOMERY, \$14,000,000 (SOURCE OF FUNDS: FEDERAL GRANT FUNDS AND
UNUSED PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY GRANT FUNDS)
BEFORE THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
JULY 7, 2020**

Good afternoon. On behalf of The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce and our more than 500 member businesses and nonprofit organizations in Montgomery County, I am sending this testimony in support of the recommended special appropriation for Reopen Montgomery, which will reimburse businesses and non-profit organizations for additional expenses incurred to reopen and comply with the State and County's public health requirements.

Having been involved in and understand our members' experience from the other grants, we ask that this program:

- Does a random rolling lottery system (similar to the telework grant) in batches of 400-500; not first-come-first serve (every 2 weeks). This will enable more people to get access to the funds faster unlike the PHEG program which left so many businesses out of the funding.
- Provide a sample application with enough time for applicants to pull together the information they will need prior to opening
- Have the opening of this program during the month of July. We are concerned that since this is a two-week open pool, the distribution of funds won't start taking place until later in the summer or early fall. Businesses need the funds as soon as possible.

As you all can agree, the opportunity for reopening will be welcome by so many of our member businesses however there will understandably be concern from most employers and employees that their place of work is safe. This grant will be a great help in getting businesses get back to work and our community to be confident that those businesses are doing what they can to provide that safety.

Your support of the business community during this current crisis is truly appreciated by our chamber and all of the businesses in our community. To that end, we stand ready to continue to partner with the County in relaying information to the business community and working with you to help businesses and non-profits receive the help they need.