



**Special Appropriation to the County Government's FY21 Operating Budget,
Department of Finance, Economic Development Fund**

COVID-19 Response - Reopen Montgomery

July 7, 2020

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Councilmembers:

The *Restaurant Association of Maryland* supports the Special Appropriation to assist businesses with reopening expenses that are necessary to comply with State and County COVID-19 operating requirements/guidelines for protecting customers and employees.

As has been widely reported, the restaurant/foodservice industry has suffered catastrophic losses as a result of COVID-19. Because sales were restricted to only carry-out, delivery and drive-thru service for three months, restaurant businesses faced a significant decrease in cash flow. As a result, many have depleted any cash reserves and resorted to loans to keep their businesses afloat through the crisis.

Most restaurant owners estimate that it will take months or up to a year to fully recover and pay off related debts after sales return to normal. We do not know when customers will feel comfortable enough to dine out with the frequency they did so before the pandemic. However, restaurants are ready, and we are committed to providing a safe environment for our customers and employees.

Until business returns to normal, costs for additional equipment, supplies, materials, barriers, cleaning/disinfecting and other necessary compliance/safety measures will be difficult for business owners to bear. The grants for reimbursable expenditures provided through this Reopen Montgomery fund will be a tremendous help to restaurants as we reopen safely.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support.

Sincerely,

Melvin R. Thompson
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs and Public Policy