



GREATER BETHESDA
CHAMBER of COMMERCE

Better business. Stronger community.

June 24, 2024

The Honorable Andrew Friedson
and Members of the Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue, Sixth Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Council President Friedson and Members of the Council:

On behalf of the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce, representing more than 600 employers, mostly small businesses and non-profit organizations in greater Bethesda and surrounding areas in Montgomery County, we would like to ask, once again, that the Council support the MOVE Act that Councilmember Glass proposed.

We fully support the codification and expansion of the existing MOVE Program to include grants for the expansion of businesses already located in the County. In addition, the Greater Bethesda Chamber has the following recommendations and questions:

- **Allow retail, industrial and flex users already located in the County to participate in the Program.** The ultimate goal of increasing the commercial tax base is not limited to office users. There are plenty of vacancies in other commercial building types that warrants the inclusion of this incentive as a factor to incentivize succeeding businesses of all types to grow.
- **Remove the 20,000 square footage cap to qualify for the program and increase the maximum funding award from \$80,000 to \$150,000.**
- As recommended in the 11/29/23 staff packet, **amend the application deadline requirement to within 180 days of lease execution.** It is not uncommon in the least for plans, permitting and construction to take up to or exceed six months from lease execution.
- **Eliminate building class (A or B) as a requirement for grant application.** Building class type is a subjective classification. The same Class-A downtown building is likely to be considered a Class-B building if located in a suburban office park. However, an older, suburban Class-C building located on a Metro station, or an I-270 interchange is more likely to be considered a Class-B building. If this requirement is codified into law, what are the metrics that will determine which buildings are eligible and which are not?

We would like to thank the Council for recognizing the overall importance of economic development and investing in mechanisms to entice business to come to Montgomery County and to grow and maintain their homes here. This kind of focused initiative will pay dividends long into our county's future. The GBCC also believes that promoting commerce and economic development is the job of everyone and sees this legislation being presented by the Council Economic Development Committee as a step in the right direction. And look forward to seeing it passed and implemented.

Attracting new companies and fostering business expansion for our existing companies is vitally important and the MOVE Act will help jumpstart local economies with the expansion of the program's eligibility from businesses looking to locate into the county to also include those that want to expand their office space within the county.

The Chamber wants all businesses to succeed, and we believe that codifying this incentive under the Economic Development Fund will begin to address some of the challenges faced by Bethesda businesses. Business growth and development is ultimately the key to a thriving community, a thriving Bethesda, a thriving County, and a thriving Maryland. This is one more step that assists Bethesda in taking its rightful place as a business and residential hub, and economic engine in Montgomery County for those who live here, who work here, and who come here to enjoy the wonderful amenities we have to offer.

Thank you to the Council for understanding the need for more intentional economic development tools and taking action to address it.

We appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on this and look forward to working hand in hand with the Council and the MCEDC on this initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allie Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Allie Williams, President & CEO
Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce
Bethesda, Maryland