

April 2, 2020

Governor Tom Wolf
Office of the Governor
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

DCED Secretary Dennis M. Davin
Commonwealth Keystone Building
400 North Street, 4th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Gov. Wolf and Secretary Davin,

Diversity Chambers in the Greater Philadelphia Region, representing more than 110,000 businesses and 190,000 employees, urge Pennsylvania elected officials and the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) to provide immediate support to minority and disadvantaged- owned small businesses amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

As with any public crisis, those institutionally least advantaged are the most affected. Because of the spread of this virus, minority-owned and disadvantaged small businesses in the Philadelphia region have experienced an unprecedented financial liquidity crisis. Mandatory temporary closings have placed many diverse small businesses on the brink of collapse.

It is in this context that the Diverse Chambers of Commerce in the Greater Philadelphia region strongly urge the PA Legislature and DCED to provide immediate relief to minority-owned and disadvantaged small businesses (including LGBTQ-Owned) so they can keep making payroll, keep their doors open and avoid mounting debt that will result from this unprecedented event. According to FEMA, 40% of businesses that close during an emergency fail to re-open. Therefore, it is critical that the assistance reach our communities as soon as possible, otherwise the consequences will be catastrophic. We believe the Commonwealth can assist in the following ways:

- Create a fund dedicated to disadvantaged businesses of 2 to 50 employees and businesses located in low-income areas that includes grant funds and 0% interest loans.
- Ensure that loan programs have a simple and fast application process, as well as ensure that grants are loans are awarded promptly.
- Provide financial support for non-profit organizations that support disadvantaged businesses.

- Increase funding to community based CDFIs that focus on disadvantaged businesses. Including the reactivation of the State's Small Business Credit Initiative.
- Create measures that provide liquidity for the self-employed and freelancer communities, including access to Unemployment Insurance benefits.
- Create measures that provide forbearance on current business loans and credit card payments.
- Temporary relief from business taxes, including postponement of due dates.
- Create measures that provide temporary commercial rent relief, as well as a temporary moratorium on commercial evictions, foreclosures, utility shut offs, and auto/equipment repossession.
- Create measures the require insurance companies to cover standard 'business interruption insurance' for the pandemic.

COVID-19 does not respect status, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age or ability. Anyone can succumb. At the same time, as with any public crisis, those historically and institutionally least advantaged are hardest hit. We urge Pennsylvania elected officials and the DCED to provide immediate support to minority and disadvantaged- owned small businesses, the backbone of our region's economy.

Sincerely,



Donavan West
President & CEO
African American Chamber of Commerce



Narasimha B. Shenoy
President & CEO
Asian American Chamber of Commerce of
Greater Philadelphia



Jennifer Rodriguez, MCP
President & CEO
Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of
Commerce



Zach Wilcha
President & CEO
Independence Business Alliance (LGBTQ+
Chamber of Commerce)

CC:

Hon. Joe Scarnati, President Pro Tem, Senate
Hon. Mike Turzai, Speaker, House of Representatives
Hon. Jake Corman, Senate Majority Leader
Hon. Jay Costa, Senate Minority Leader
Hon. Bryan Cutler, House Majority Leader
Hon. Jason Dawkins, Chair, Philadelphia House Delegation
Hon. Frank Dermody, House Minority Leader
Hon. Christine M. Tartaglione, Chair, Philadelphia Senate Delegation