



December 4, 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

The Honorable Andy Harris
United States House of Representatives
2334 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dutch Ruppersberger
United States House of Representatives
2206 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Sarbanes
United States House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Anthony Brown
United States House of Representatives
1323 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
United States House of Representatives
1705 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Trone
United States House of Representatives
1213 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kweisi Mfume
United States House of Representatives
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jamie Raskin
United States House of Representatives
412 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of Maryland's Congressional Delegation:

As leaders from Maryland's business and professional associations, representing hundreds of thousands of members from across the state, we continue to be committed to doing our part to assist in mitigating the public health impact of COVID-19. The health and safety of our members, their employees, their customers and the general public remain our top priority. However, as you know, we and our members continue to struggle with the economic consequences of the pandemic. Therefore, it is absolutely critical that Congress pass a pandemic relief bill before the end of the year.

We know that enacting legislation will require bipartisan compromise. The release of a proposal from a bipartisan group of Senate and House members, as well as the revisions to the Senate GOP proposal, provide an opening to break the current impasse. We encourage you to push for a bipartisan agreement that can pass this year that adequately addresses the following issues that are critical to our members:

Legal Liability Protections

We find ourselves in an unprecedented health crisis, and despite employers' best efforts to comply with public health guidance, many are concerned that they will be forced to defend themselves against a wave of lawsuits. This concern is exacerbated by news of additional litigation being filed each day the pandemic continues. Congress must take quick action to ensure that emergency response and recovery is not unnecessarily hampered by lawsuits and other costly claims. As they come back on-line and return to work, businesses must be protected from needless litigation.



We urge Congress to provide a safe harbor that holds bad actors accountable but protects those employers who are working to follow public health guidance. Temporary protections should remain in place for the duration of the crisis and response that cover: 1) businesses that follow government guidelines against COVID-19 exposure claims; 2) healthcare providers and facilities on the front lines of the COVID-19 response; 3) manufacturers that repurposed production and distribution to provide PPE, sanitizers and other needed supplies; 4) companies that have donated their stock of supplies to hospitals and medical professionals; and 5) public companies that may face securities lawsuits, including those driven largely on stock price drops resulting from the global pandemic under the spurious assertion that management failed to warn investors.

Unemployment Insurance

Presently, Maryland's Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund is healthy, but the longer this crisis continues the more precarious it becomes for the stability of the fund. While COVID-19-specific UI benefits are paid through federal dollars, Maryland-specific claims will not be covered. Depleting our trust fund will force Maryland employers, who have closed their doors through no fault of their own, to face significant UI tax increases in future years. Even businesses that were able to remain open will incur tax increases due to a depleted fund and the need to repay the loan, which triggers higher fee schedules.

We urge Congress to consider grants or forgivable loans to address this issue. This would allow states like Maryland to avoid any significant UI tax increases for employers—who are already struggling with the economic and financial impacts of the pandemic—in future years.

Additional Support for State & Local Governments

Response and recovery to COVID-19 has resulted in significant revenue shortfall projections for Maryland. This shortfall will force the state to make drastic cuts to programs employers depend on including those that provide economic security and public safety.

Congress must appropriate additional funds for states and territories, in the form of direct federal aid, to allow states to replace lost revenue. Direct federal funding is necessary to offset drastic state revenue shortfalls.

Support for Small Businesses & All Nonprofits

As you know, Section 501(c) designation encompasses all types of nonprofit organizations. This includes trade and professional associations as well as local, county and regional chambers of commerce. These organizations play a critical role in training America's workforce, creating industry and professional standards and disseminating essential information and resources to people in need—particularly during times of crisis. They are workforce development champions, economic developers, talent pipeline initiators, safety trainers and so much more.

They are also organizations that require staff and operational expenses to fulfill these duties. Due to unprecedented financial loss, without support, these organizations will be unable to meet the critical obligations to the members that they serve. While some relief for nonprofits was included in the last COVID relief package, not all 501(c) organizations were included and able to access the Paycheck Protection Program.

Collectively, we have repeatedly and urgently requested financial support for all 501(c) organizations, as it was provided for other members of the business and nonprofit communities, in future stimulus packages being considered by Congress.

This pandemic is a challenge unlike any we have ever faced, and the business community stands ready to continue to do all that we can to overcome it and remain on the road to recovery. Failure by Congress to act will be catastrophic for our state.



Your efforts to complete a pandemic relief bill prior to the end of the year will save countless businesses and families across Maryland.

Sincerely,

Maryland Chamber of Commerce
Maryland Tech Council
Carroll County Chamber of Commerce
Cecil County Chamber of Commerce
Central Maryland Chamber of Commerce
Dorchester Chamber of Commerce
Frederick County Chamber of Commerce
Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce
Garrett County Chamber of Commerce
Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce
Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce
Harford County Chamber of Commerce
Howard County Chamber of Commerce
Kent County Chamber of Commerce
Northern Anne Arundel County Chamber of Commerce
Pikesville-Owings Mills Regional Chamber of Commerce
Rockville Chamber of Commerce
Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce
Washington County Chamber of Commerce

