



Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce, Inc.

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Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2020 Operating Budget

Economic Development Non-Departmental Account

Support for COVID-19 Response – 3R Initiative, \$500,000

PUBLIC HEARING – June 16, 2020

SUPPORT

The Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce supports the \$500,000 special appropriation to fund the 3R Initiative to help Reopen, Relaunch, Reimagine our business community. We greatly appreciate the Council's support of businesses throughout the pandemic. Just as the Telework Assistance Program provided valuable assistance to keep businesses work from home throughout the shutdown, this initiative will help restaurants and retailers reopen their doors to the community.

We certainly support the cautious reopening of businesses in Montgomery County. We appreciate the safety measures required to open up to employees and the general public. However, there are costs involved in reopening. Sometimes significant costs. For some businesses it may be as easy as signage or hand sanitizers, for other businesses it may be a major capitol purchase to completely reconfigure their space.

It seems appropriate that the 3R initiative begin with restaurants and retailers as they are the first to reopen and tend to have a more direct interface with the general public. As Phase II and III come on-line, other industries will have similar costs related to the opening of their businesses. We would ask that you consider expansion of this initiative to include additional industries.

I do have a concern about how the funds for this program will be allocated. I understand that some restaurants and retails will need technical expertise in redesigning their space to comply with County regulations, but they will also need the cash to implement any recommendations. My biggest concern is that the money will be spent creating a great plan, with little left over for implementation.

I'm also curious to know which geographic areas will be included in the initiative. To date, I haven't seen an analysis of which geographic areas of the County have had a disproportional impact of the health crisis. If we have that data, it would be important to share, specifically which metrics are being used to measure impact.

That said, we wholeheartedly support funding to help businesses reopen and thank you for all you are doing to help businesses make it through this crisis.

Thank you.

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