



May 12, 2021

Mayor Jon Mitchell
133 William Street
New Bedford, MA 02740

Dear Mayor Mitchell:

As we are starting to get more clarity around the guidance regarding dollars to cities in the American Rescue Plan, we thought it important, on behalf of the Board of Directors of One SouthCoast Chamber to offer our thoughts on how these funds could support, in part, the continued comeback for small businesses in our city.

You are fully aware that not all businesses have been affected equally, with hospitality and restaurant sectors among the most hard hit. Some relief has come from both the Payroll Protection Program and the SBA's recent Restaurant Revitalization Fund. The city has worked hard to remove barriers to outdoor dining, and it is fair to say that nearly all cases these establishments have worked hard to follow the guidance and be good corporate citizens, even as their livelihoods and those of their employees were threatened.

Small businesses are often less sophisticated than their larger counterparts, largely due to the fact that their owners are often wearing multiple hats - from accounting, to human resources and operations, in addition to being the face of the company. With the added challenge of trying to get people to return to work, we are faced with seemingly contradictory challenges of high unemployment and hundreds of open jobs. While some of this may be attributed to the high federal stipend added to unemployment compensation, childcare issues remain a significant barrier to returning to work. We ask that as you discuss issues of importance with fellow mayors and the delegation that these issues remain paramount.

Respectfully, the Chamber would like to ask for the following to be considered as you address the needs of the city and the guidance offered on the use of funds:

- The establishment of a competitive grant program for continued recovery from COVID-related business challenges, including childcare
- The establishment of a bonus pool through which businesses may receive reimbursement for bonuses paid to existing employees for assisting their businesses to attain full staffing and for existing employees who have chosen to remain in their positions

- A freeze for the next two years on commercial property taxes
- The establishment of a funded business assistance position from the business world to work with MSBDC, SCORE, the Chamber and others as a resource and ombudsman for small businesses
- The addition of personnel and needed technology upgrades to the building department to develop a "One Stop Shop" to streamline and speed up the permitting process

At the Chamber, we are fully aware of the many demands that will be placed on the incoming funding, but we believe that as Mayor you have a unique moment to help bring the economy of the city back to full capacity and to ensure that residents will have quality jobs and a brighter future. A strategic investment of funds to targeted programs could and should yield revenue benefits in the future for those businesses and the city.

We look forward to your response, and wish you well in these difficult times. There is a light at the end of the tunnel, and we look forward to working with you to make that light brighter.

Sincerely,



Rick Kidder
Co-CEO
One SouthCoast Chamber



Michael O'Sullivan
Co-CEO
One SouthCoast Chamber

Cc: City Council President Joseph Lopes