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Addressing this crisis is the most important work we will do

LETTER TO THE EDITOR Darréll Brown, White Plains The writer is director of the Charles County Economic Development Department.
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Last week, in a conference call with leadership from Maryland's Counties, Governor Hogan emphasized two very important points about this COVID-19 national emergency. First, what we are experiencing right now is unprecedented. Second, as government officials, the work we are doing to address this emergency is the most important work we will ever do. That perspective is reflected locally in the decisive actions taken by the Charles County Board of Commissioners and county staff to address this emergency.

I have shared these points with our economic development team more than once in the last few days because I couldn't agree more. And as the director of Charles County's Economic Development Department, I want you — the Charles County business community — to know that we are fully focused on support and assistance for our local businesses during this crisis.

Over the last few days, I have participated in several conference calls to address both general community and business needs. Those calls continue to take place regularly to ensure accurate information is getting to the people and organizations that need it. In addition to emergency services updates, I participated in a call with Maryland Department of Commerce Secretary Kelly Schulz and Department of Labor Secretary Tiffany Robinson to specifically address issues related to our private sector business, and I participated in a conference call with our economic development colleagues in the Maryland Capital Region to discuss best practices and economic development response so far.

The U.S. Small Business Administration has developed an “Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program” to help businesses that have been affected by the COVID-19 crisis. This has been evolving over the last few days, and the governor’s office is taking action to make Maryland businesses eligible, including Charles County. Final details on how to apply will be available very soon. When that happens, we will have information on our website and put it out on social media with links to the SBA as well as contact information to our department should you need assistance.

The EDD is also developing our own loan program for our local businesses; more information about that is on the way. My partner, deputy director Marcia Keeth, and marketing coordinator Jennifer Reginald have been working on new webpages to make information accessible. Soon, we will have a web page where you can find information about and links to a number of resources for businesses. In the meantime, several of the major resources for business are included on the Charles County Government COVID-19 web page. We have also launched a web page with status updates for local businesses. We will be promoting this page heavily to the public; details on how to include your business are at the top of that page.

For the duration of this crisis, the economic development department’s priority will be to help our local companies deal with these unprecedented circumstances. That includes getting you the most up-to-date, relevant and accurate information. Please contact us if we can be of assistance in any way. This situation will continue to evolve, and you have our commitment that we will continue to stay

on top of it. Because — to paraphrase Governor Hogan and Charles County Commissioner President Reuben B. Collins II — as your economic development department, this is the most important work we will ever do.

Darréll Brown, White Plains

The writer is director of the Charles County Economic Development Department.