

## **HR Tracker, ¶46,796, Maryland governor orders non-essential businesses to close; economic relief package to help small businesses and workers — STATE LAW, (Mar. 30, 2020)**

Maryland Governor Larry Hogan on March 23, 2020, ordered the closure of all non-essential businesses in the state and announced a \$175 million relief package to assist employees, small businesses, and nonprofit organizations affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The governor again urged Marylanders to help their neighbors by staying home in order to slow the spread of COVID-19.

“We are telling all Marylanders to follow all of the directives and to follow the state law against crowds of more than ten people,” said Governor Hogan. “And we are telling you, unless you have an essential reason to leave your house, stay in your home. Today’s actions of closing non-essential businesses are absolutely necessary to protect the health of Marylanders and to save lives.”

Governor Hogan has enacted an emergency Executive Order No. 20-03-23-01 to close all non-essential businesses across the state, effective as of 5:00 p.m. March 23. Businesses required to close under previous orders are to remain closed.

The business closure does not apply to critical infrastructure sectors identified by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

In addition to what is already closed by prior orders, this order requires the closure of anything that is not included in the new federal guidelines for critical infrastructure sectors.

Interpretive Guidance can be found here.

While this is not a shelter-in-place order, all Marylanders are urged to remain home and adhere to the governor’s guidance for social distancing. The governor announced that beginning today, further enforcement actions will be taken to disperse any gatherings in violation of the governor’s orders.

### **Economic relief package**

In addition, the Governor announced more than \$175 million to assist small businesses and workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The Maryland Department of Commerce will offer up to \$125 million in loans and grants to small businesses and nonprofits through the Maryland Small Business COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund. A \$75 million loan fund and a \$50 million grant fund, with \$1 million in grants dedicated to non-profits, will provide working capital to be used for payroll, rent, fixed-debt payments and other mission critical cash operating costs. Businesses and nonprofits with under 50 full- and part-time employees will be eligible, and loans will range up to \$50,000 and grants up to \$10,000. Additional eligibility requirements can be found here.
- Maryland Commerce is also working on creating a \$5 million fund to incentivize businesses to manufacture personal protective equipment (PPE) and other supplies to satisfy the increasing needs of the healthcare industry.
- The Department also has a number of existing financing programs, like Advantage Maryland, which provides conditional loans for new businesses or business expansions; the Maryland Industrial Development Financing Authority and Fund (MIDFA), which provides loan guarantees; the Maryland Small Business Development Financing Authority (MSBDFFA), which provides financial assistance to economically disadvantaged businesses; and the Non-Profit Interest-Free Micro-Bridge Loan Program, which provides loans to nonprofits to support ongoing operating costs while waiting on a future government grant or contract. A total of about \$40 million is available through these existing programs.
- Governor Hogan has allocated \$5 million and the Maryland Department of Labor has allocated \$2 million to collaboratively launch the COVID-19 Layoff Aversion Fund. A total of \$7 million in funds will be available to provide flexible rapid response services to proactively support businesses and workers undergoing economic

stresses due to COVID-19. Funding can help Maryland's workforce adhere to social distancing policies by purchasing remote access equipment and software to allow employees to work from home, providing on-site cleaning and sanitation services at businesses that have workers delivering essential services, and implementing other creative strategies to mitigate potential layoffs or closures in the business community.

For more information on the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) on business, see [here](#).

**Source:** State of Maryland, Office of the Governor, News Release, March 23, 2020.