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HARFORD COUNTY EXECUTIVE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Harford County COVID-19 Update: \$5,000 Business Owner Relief Grants; Completing Stage 1 Reopening

BEL AIR, Md., (May 29, 2020) – *County Executive Barry Glassman issued the following update on COVID-19 in Harford County:*

“This morning the Maryland Department of Health is reporting a total of 854 confirmed COVID-19 cases, 46 deaths and 3 probable deaths among Harford County residents. Harford County’s fatality rate continues to be low compared to the rest of the state, but we saw an increase in the past week that we must keep an eye on. Two nursing homes continue to represent more than half of reported fatalities.

This week also brought [reports from Citizens Care & Rehabilitation Center in Havre de Grace](#) of at least one staff member with COVID-19, but no cases among residents. Currently, all staff and residents are being tested and we will continue to monitor this situation.

Testing data

Harford County Health Department reports that 3.5% of the county’s population has been tested, which is below the state average of 4.6%. However, our positivity rate is 8.5%. This is a good sign according to public health officials who recommend levels below 12% to indicate we are testing enough of our population to make informed decisions about reopening.

CDC update on transmission

The [CDC has updated its guidance](#) on the primary way COVID-19 is transmitted. While it may spread from touching surfaces and then touching your face, the CDC now says the primary method is close contact through coughing and sneezing or even talking or breathing. Combined with information

that the virus can be transmitted up to 48 hours before symptoms appear, this is why face masks are still needed to protect those around you.

Completing Stage One reopening today at 5 p.m.

This week Gov. Hogan announced that local jurisdictions could [complete Stage One](#) of the Maryland Roadmap to Recovery starting today at 5 p.m., and Harford County will move safely and quickly to reopen to the extent permitted. This includes youth sports, youth day camps, outdoor pools and outdoor dining for restaurants, all with limited capacities and specified safety precautions.

To facilitate outdoor dining in Harford County, yesterday I issued an [executive order](#) allowing restaurants to use a portion of their parking lots for table service, similar to my executive order for retail sales.

New! \$5,000 COVID-19 relief grants for business owners

More help is on the way for business owners through Harford County's newest grant program funded through the federal CARES Act. Companies of any size, even those without employees, can apply for \$5,000 grants toward their commercial business mortgage, or their rent or lease of commercial property used for business operations. [Online applications and FAQs will be posted on the county website Wednesday, June 3](#) and we will begin accepting submissions the following Wednesday, June 10.

Our goal is a quick turnaround for funding. In fact, we will begin issuing payments next week for some of the more than 700 applications we began accepting four days ago for our [COVID-19 relief grants for small business and farms](#). As long as applications are properly filled out, we expect payouts for all of these initial applicants to be completed by the end of June. I would like to thank our staff who are working to process applications efficiently and as fast as possible.

Free public Wi-Fi

For our residents who need or want Internet connectivity, especially during this crisis, we expanded the free public Wi-Fi normally accessible inside five of our county facilities to the parking lots outside. Although county buildings remain generally closed to the public, free Wi-Fi is available outside the Agricultural Center in Street, Churchville Recreational Center's Level Building, Veronica "Roni" Chenoweth Activity Center in Fallston, McFaul Activities Center in Bel Air, and the Havre de Grace Senior Center. Passwords are not required, and signals will be strongest closer to the buildings.

Supporting volunteer first responders

Volunteer firefighters and EMTs are on the front lines in emergencies and the county's LOSAP retirement program helps us attract and retain these critical first responders. But the statewide shutdown made it difficult for volunteers to attend trainings and events needed to qualify for

benefits. So this week I [waived the requirement for 2020](#) to keep volunteers on track for benefits and help them stay with Harford County for years to come.


Harford County ePermit Center

County government remains open for business and continues to expand our online services. The newest addition is complete online processing for residential electrical permits. Paper permit applications no longer have to be uploaded and residents can expect next business day processing and make payments online. Visit the [Harford County ePermit Center](#) for more.

Looking ahead

Next week I hope to see Gov. Hogan begin moving into Stage Two of reopening. Of course, this will depend on the data and continuing our 'new normal' of social distancing, limits on gatherings, wearing face masks inside public places, and other safety precautions. With everyone working together, I believe we can manage this public health crisis and safely reopen our economy. Thanks & be safe."

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