Governor Cooper Announces Additional $40 Million COVID Relief for Small Businesses

Steady numbers allow for large outdoor venues to open at 7% with safety precautions

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Some North Carolina small businesses that have experienced extraordinary disruption to their operations due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic may benefit from a $40 million relief program to help offset fixed costs like rent, mortgage interests and utility bills, Governor Roy Cooper announced today.

“Small businesses are the backbone of our economy – powering our local communities and giving back in so many ways. They deserve our support, and this new initiative can help them weather this tough time,” said Governor Cooper.

The N.C. Mortgage, Utility and Rent Relief (MURR), administered by the North Carolina Department of Commerce, can provide up to $20,000 in relief funds per qualifying business location. Business applicants from certain industry sectors that have not been able to operate during the COVID period may apply for up to two of their business locations.

Applicants can apply for up to four months of mortgage interest or rent expenses, and utility expenses. The help offers relief for some of the fixed costs a business cannot easily control on its own. Applications to the program should open next week and will be handled on a first-come, first-served basis. Applicants must certify that they were closed during the period April 1 through July 31, 2020; they expect to be able to operate after the COVID crisis has passed; and they have not been reimbursed by any other federal source for the expenses for which they seek reimbursement through this program.

Eligible applicants include:

- Amusement parks

- Banquet Halls (with catering staff)
- Bars, taverns, night clubs, cocktail lounges
- Bingo parlors
- Bowling alleys/centers
- Dance halls
- Indoor fitness and recreation centers
- Motion picture/movie theaters (except drive-ins)
- Museums

The Department of Commerce will begin accepting applications soon. Business leaders can learn about the MURR program by registering for one of the free educational webinars offered by the Department of Commerce over the next two weeks.

For the webinar schedule and additional information on the program, visit www.nccommerce.com/murr (http://www.nccommerce.com/murr).

Large, Outdoor Venues

Governor Cooper and NC DHHS Secretary Dr. Mandy Cohen also announced that effective October 2, large outdoor venues would be permitted to open at 7% capacity with key safety precautions in place. The announcement was made today so these locations could begin putting safety measures in place in order to operate.

Large entertainment venues are those that can seat over 10,000.

“We will continue analyzing our data and indicators as we determine how to move forward safely in other areas that may be included in the new order on October 2nd. In it, we hope to ease some other restrictions, while still keeping safety protocols like masks, social distancing, and mass gathering limits in place,” said Governor Cooper.

”With more things open and people moving around more, we need everyone to stay vigilant about wearing a mask, waiting six feet apart, and washing their hands often,” said Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D. “Our progress is fragile and will take our continued hard to work to protect it.”

State and public health officials will continue watching the key COVID-19 trends over the next week to determine if any further restrictions can be eased when the current Executive Order expires October 2 at 5 pm.

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