



September 22, 2020

Senator Jeanne Shaheen
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510



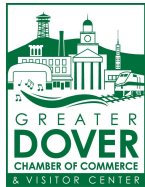
Dear Senator Shaheen,

The Seacoast Chamber Alliance respectfully requests that you and your colleagues in the Senate work together in a bipartisan effort to approve a comprehensive funding relief package to support our businesses.



Although we- and our members- are grateful for the support already allocated through previous CARES Act funding relief packages, we know this economic crisis caused by COVID-19 is far from over. And for many, the worst is yet to come.

As we head into the winter months, many are seeing continued declines in business over concerns about a surge in coronavirus cases during what is typically the season for flu and other illnesses.



Our restaurants and hospitality industry in particular are seeing a lack of consumer confidence in dining indoors. Restaurants are often 'destination businesses' that attract patrons not just to their own business but serve as an attraction for other businesses located nearby. Downtown business districts rely heavily on restaurants to bring customers to the area and help to support numerous other businesses such as retailers and service-oriented businesses. The loss of restaurants will create a ripple effect that will be catastrophic to downtown business districts resulting in the closing of many other small businesses, loss of jobs and empty buildings.



Although hospitality businesses are facing an urgent need due to the change of season, many other businesses are still in need of assistance as well. Supply chain delays, slower mail and shipping services and lower customer spending are resulting in businesses seeing lower revenues and higher costs for materials across all sectors. A great many of our businesses are not able to operate at full capacity and are furloughing employees as a result.



Feedback from some of our members is below. It is clear that without another round of assistance, many businesses will not survive into 2021. Please urge the Senate to vote on a bipartisan bill and send the relief needed to ensure our business community's survival.

Thank you for your consideration.

John Nyhan, President, Hampton Area Chamber of Commerce
Jennifer Wheeler, President, Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce
Valerie Rochon, Chief Collaborator, Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth
Margaret Joyce, President, Greater Dover Chamber of Commerce
Allison St. Laurent, Executive Director, The Falls Chamber of Commerce
Laura Ring, President, Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce

Feedback from Members:

From a small independent restaurant:

Most people are getting to a point that even if congress needs to piecemeal a deal, we need to get some funding. Those parts of the package that everyone agrees upon should be funded, leaving aside that which is contentious. MUST be funded now. To hold up the funding to small business, while the other funding is being debated, isn't helping anyone at all. Could help many small businesses by getting the funding out as quickly as possible. At the end of the day, stop holding out for everything, agree on common ground, get it done, and get the funds out to those who desperately need it.

From a downtown Retail & Commercial Real Estate

I'm concerned that the level of additional funding that Sen. Shaheen is supporting may be more than necessary for most circumstances and, more importantly, will certainly add even more to the huge debt that we are already leaving on the shoulders of the younger generations. I suggest that they stop holding out to get everything, but get SOMETHING – those things they agree upon now - so our businesses can stay in business. They can argue about the contentious items later, which may or may not happen.

From a Historic Museum

By our interactions, based here at the historic museum, on common interests in our past and our cultural heritage, we have played a significant part in creating and maintaining a vibrant economy. With our physical distance, though, our places in the economy have evaporated. In the absence of the PPP loan program, it seems doubtful that our organization would have been able to cover our payroll costs this summer, and our prospects are looking increasingly dim if the federal government does not provide additional funding to ensure the sustainability of essential community organizations like ours. Cultural and historic nonprofits are key to the local tourism economy, and to the economy of the region. We urge New Hampshire's legislators to support additional federal support for our community, and our economy.

From a Catering Company

Our challenges lie in people not being able to gather. Limits on indoor get-togethers and events are our main difficulty. Our corporate catering accounts have all but dried up due to people working remotely and not going into their offices. Our wedding business is about half of what it was last year and that will all end in early November. Previous events that we had scheduled, like being an in house caterer for a private club in Portsmouth, will not be gathering and thus a loss of over \$45,000 for the winter season. We have come up with some creative ways to bring in revenue but we will likely fall far short of the \$20,000 we need monthly for occupancy and to pay our full-time staff. When we discuss our outlook for the next 6 months, it's looking for ways to survive that next 6 months. It will be very challenging and will likely cause us to go further into debt to maintain everything. catering service and function hall.

From a History Museum/Attraction

The museum's fiscal year ends on March 31st - we project a \$180,000 operating deficit. Up to this point we have been able to keep year-round staff [27] fully employed and a reasonable amount of programming, mostly focused on serving the schools. To reduce costs we hired far fewer seasonal employees [last year we had about 65 part-time seasonal staff, this year a dozen.] Looking to 2021 - I anticipate that we will continue to run a significant deficit. This may result in some furloughing of some staff and reduction in programs, especially special events that draw such large crowds to the city. No matter if the pandemic is under control with a vaccine or better treatments, tourism will be down and philanthropy will be depleted for the most part because of donor fatigue and significantly reduced funds. I think 2021 will be much harder for tourist-based businesses and cultural organizations. Unless there is a significant change, older and middle age people [a major part of our audience] will not travel in great numbers because of reduced funds or their reluctance to spend because of the fluctuating economy.

From a 501(c)(6) Membership Art Association

As a non-profit organization, we really need all the help we can get to stay in existence. As an art oriented organization, we are finding it extremely challenging to get grants and do other fundraising because much of the money available in grants, (other than the governor's main street funds), and from individuals, seems to be prioritized to more social oriented non-profits - such as food banks, homeless shelters, etc. We certainly realize these are very important at this time, but we also have to have the ability for other nonprofits to get funding assistance. We have had to reinvent the way we do business by moving more of it online, which has meant increased staff costs, and software expenditures so things remain a challenge for us.

From an Amusement Attraction

Thank you for spearheading this. I have to tell you, this may be the most important battle we have had to wage collectively. This is the first time I've stopped and put what we are dealing with and what it could very well mean for my family and our business into words. The result? I cried for an hour. Please fight for us..

From a Cultural/Tourist destination

We were closed for our 2020 season (this weekend would have been our closing weekend!). This resulted in the loss of over \$3 million in income, and while we were able to reduce our expenses by \$1.7 million, we still face a massive challenge this year, and uncertainty about the status of our 2021 season. We did receive both a PPP loan (which we anticipate will be fully forgiven) and a NERF grant, which made a big difference for us – but even this amazing support (totaling over \$800K!) didn't cover our losses for this fiscal year. However, nobody knows what is going to happen next year. We are in the process of considering benefit reductions, furloughs, and possibly even layoffs for early 2021, depending on what happens. If an effective vaccine is widely available and administered by May or June (which is seeming less and less likely, we will be able to open safely. Having said that, we can't wait till June to make tough decisions – so even if we can open, we need additional support in the winter months. And if we can't open, we need even more support. I can't imagine where we would be without the PPP loan and NERF grant this year. If a vaccine isn't forthcoming, we could be in the exact same position next year, and would be looking for a similar amount of funding. Star is open to the public and welcomes nearly 20,000 people a year. We consider ourselves stewards of this NH treasure, we are grateful

with the funding we received in 2020, and we know that without continued support, our ability to continue to welcome guests and protect this important NH resource would be in jeopardy. Senator Shaheen has been an effective advocate for our nonprofit organization (and many others), and I am happy she is continuing this fight.