



April 7, 2020

Dear Community Leader:

How a community responds to the health and economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic may very well define who we are as a community for a very long time. Many of our small businesses are facing hardship, even permanent closure. According to a recent US Chamber of Commerce poll, 54% of US small businesses have either closed or expect to close temporarily within the next two weeks. Permanent closures are on the horizon too: 43% say they are 3-6 months away, 24% say two months or less, and 11% say they have resources for less than one month.

Congress has dedicated \$350 billion through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES). We are encouraging every local small business in Washington County to apply for these funds through their bank and with the assistance of the Small Business Development Center at Blinn. But the program is struggling amid overwhelming demand and some small businesses are having trouble accessing these funds within the time necessary to save their business.

Small businesses are the backbone of our community and employ almost half of all Washington County's workforce. Loss of these businesses will be devastating to the long-term economy in our community. Small businesses are the ones that employ your neighbor, sponsor the baseball team, and give first jobs to our teenagers. Small businesses bring diversity to the types of restaurants available for a date night with your spouse, they support the Chamber of Commerce, and they are the first ones to step in when we have needed them during previous disasters. **Now, our small businesses need us.**

We have established the Washington County COVID-19 Response Fund to provide grants to our most at-risk small businesses, those with fewer than 20 full-time equivalent employees. The amount of funds available to each business will be determined based on the response to this request for support. Any Washington County Business is eligible to apply based on 1) number of employees, 2) must have been a for-profit business in good standing as of January 31, 2020, and 3) must demonstrate how the COVID-19 emergency has negatively impacted their business.

Please consider what you can donate to this fund which is tax deductible under the City of Brenham's 501(c)(3) status. Confirmation of your donation will be provided. For additional information, please contact me at [SCates@CityofBrenham.org](mailto:SCates@CityofBrenham.org) or 979-337-7231. We are truly **#InThisTogether**.

Stay Well,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan S. Cates". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last names being the most prominent.

Susan S. Cates  
City of Brenham  
Director of Economic Development