

PROVIDENCE, RI – Governor Dan McKee and RI Commerce today announced a multi-faceted strategy to support small businesses most impacted by the Washington Bridge. The State will direct funds to create a targeted business marketing campaign and propose a strategy to the General Assembly to fund grants, special events, and other business assistance activities.

“For the past few months, I have been talking to businesses in and around East Providence, and I know that they are hurting,” **said Governor Dan McKee**. “This package of supports should not only provide some relief but also help spread the message that East Providence and the East Bay are open for businesses. We look forward to working with the General Assembly to support the businesses most significantly impacted by the bridge.”

The Administration will redirect up to \$400,000 in hotel tax revenue to develop a targeted marketing campaign to encourage buying and dining locally in the areas most impacted by the Washington Bridge.

RI Commerce will propose to the General Assembly a strategy to redirect some State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF) to support businesses most impacted by the Washington Bridge, including offering \$300,000 for direct grants to eligible small businesses and \$800,000 for technical assistance, special events and placemaking activities for eligible businesses.

“We support the small businesses impacted by the Washington Bridge hardship, which is why the House Small Business Committee is holding a public hearing at 4 p.m. today at the State House,” **said House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi**. “We encourage small businesses to attend and share their stories and let us know what resources are needed to help get them through this crisis.”

“The closure of the Washington Bridge has disrupted the lives and livelihoods of thousands of Rhode Islanders, and it has been particularly difficult for us in East Providence. Small businesses here have faced especially difficult challenges in the last several months, and many are struggling to stay afloat,” **said Senate Majority Whip Valarie J. Lawson (D – Dist. 14, East Providence)**. “Along with my colleagues in the East Bay delegation, we have been in continuous consultation with the Senate President and exploring all ways to assist affected businesses. I am grateful for the work that went into this assistance package. Entering into more debt through loans, even low-interest SBA loans is not a good option for many of these businesses, and I am particularly pleased that these proposals would provide state grants to assist impacted businesses.”

RI Commerce also plans to make up to \$1 million in general revenue available through the existing Main Streets RI Streetscape Improvement Fund to support signage, beautification, and infrastructure improvements in impacted areas. Investing in improvement projects is designed to boost economic activity in these commercial districts.

“Rhode Island’s economy is driven by small businesses. It is these businesses that contribute so much to what makes our communities vibrant and diverse,” **said Secretary of Commerce Liz Tanner**. “Rhode Island Commerce is happy to collaborate with Governor McKee and the

General Assembly to help provide support to the most impacted businesses in these communities, ensuring our economy continues to thrive during reconstruction and beyond.”

Depending on the results of first quarter tax data, the Administration will also look at potentially redirecting other funds to support impacted businesses.