

For Immediate Release
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Garrett County Chamber & Partners Release Reopening Best Practices

McHenry, MD – The Garrett County Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Garrett County Health Department, Garrett Regional Medical Center, Garrett County Economic Development, Garrett County Community Action Committee and business owners/operators formed the Economic Recovery Task Force and developed the “Garrett County Roadmap to Reopening: Best Practices for Businesses & Attractions. The Task Force reviewed dozens of plans and guidelines provided by other states and communities, industry associations, CDC and Whitehouse, National Governor’s Association, and the American Enterprise Institute.

" I would like to thank the task force members and the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce for their proactive work in developing this 'Roadmap for Reopening'. This document will help protect our citizens as the economy of Garrett County recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic," said Bob Stephens, Garrett County Health Officer and Director of the Garrett County Health Department.

Preparedness is key and as businesses reopen, they should consider the best practices included in the “Roadmap to Reopening”. Businesses will need to comply with federal, state and local regulations but implementing some or all of these best practices may give comfort to their employees and customers as they return.

“The Chamber is very proud to have worked with our partners and the business community to produce such a comprehensive list of best practices to assist with the reopening of our economy,” said Nicole Christian, Chamber president & CEO. “We understand that there are concerns about reopening and fearful that the virus will spread in Garrett County but we believe steps can be taken to reduce the risk.

Garrett County’s economy has suffered greatly from the shutdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. To recover from this crisis, it is imperative to begin reopening the businesses that drive millions of dollars of revenue to the local economy and employ thousands of Garrett Countians. Businesses in the identified industries are encouraged to utilize the “Roadmap to Reopening” as a tool to help to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 to employees, customers and visitors.

Joe Refosco, co-owner of Taylor-Made Deep Creek Vacations & Sales added, “Establishing guidelines is key to reopening our area in a way that minimizes risk for everyone – the community, employees, and customers. Full compliance with policies and protocols is important for everyone’s wellbeing and the success of our efforts to move forward. By providing a clear plan, we hope to make this process less challenging for local businesses.”

According to a survey of local businesses, 52% are under duress and worried if they will be able to survive the pandemic. A national survey found that more than one in five small businesses say they are

two months or less from closing permanently, which also means permanent job losses. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 20.5 million Americans lost their jobs in April and the unemployment rate shot up to 14.7%. So, while these businesses are fighting for their survival and the ability to retain their employees, they are faced with safely reopening for the sakes of their employees and customers.

“The Garrett County Roadmap to Reopening: Best Practices for Businesses and Attractions is a great document for the diversity of businesses and offerings we have in the area. This one-stop resource not only provides in-depth recommendations and helpful guidelines to reopen the County, but will assist everyone involved to do so in the safest manner possible, said Ron Hawkes, General Manager of Wisp Resort. “The contents of the document are likely to have positive, long-lasting results as well. A wonderful example of how many individuals can unite and make great things happen.

“We’re hopeful that this document provides some reassurance to the residents of Garrett County about the steps businesses are taking towards safely reopening, and that it demonstrates that the local businesses care about our community too,” said Christian.

The “Garrett County Roadmap to Reopening” is being distributed to businesses electronically and is available on the Chamber’s website at www.visitdeepcreek.com/recovery. Hard copies will be available in the Visitors Center in McHenry when the Center reopens. To request a copy by mail, please contact the Chamber at 301-387-4386.

The Garrett County Chamber of Commerce is the largest professional business association in the region with 600 members representing every industry in the community. The mission of the Chamber is to organize, support and represent Garrett County’s business community in advancing common interests and, additionally, to promote Garrett County’s hospitality and recreation industry by attracting visitors to the county through comprehensive marketing. The Garrett County Chamber also serves as the Destination Marketing Organization and Heritage Area Management entity for the County.

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