



# Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 19, 2021

## CONTACT:

Lauren Huffman, DCEO

C: 217-622-0435

E: [Lauren.Huffman@Illinois.gov](mailto:Lauren.Huffman@Illinois.gov)

Jessica Ortiz, LISC

C: 312-550-0102

E: [jessica@risestrategygroup.com](mailto:jessica@risestrategygroup.com)

Brian Berg, CNI

C: 312-282-8260

E: [brian@mkcpr.com](mailto:brian@mkcpr.com)

## STATE OF ILLINOIS, LISC AND CNI ANNOUNCE FUNDING FOR SMALL BUSINESSES AND LAUNCH NEXT PHASE OF REBUILD DISTRESSED COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

*State and community partners release \$1.7 Million for 58 small businesses, along with \$10 million RFP for corridor improvements marking next phase of program to help communities facing damages from events of civil unrest*

**CHICAGO**—The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Local Initiatives Support Group (LISC) and Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives (CNI) today announced the first round of small businesses receiving grants as part of the Rebuild Distressed Communities (RDC) program, with \$1.7 million awarded to 58 small businesses facing significant damages due to events of civil unrest.

“While the pandemic has presented unfathomable challenges for all small businesses, some have been faced with a difficult, second rebuilding following damages related to civil unrest,” **said Gov. JB Pritzker**. “The Rebuild Distressed Communities program was developed to help these business owners overcome costs that are too difficult to muster alone, funding storefront repairs and bringing back services that communities depend on. And in recognition of the fact that many of these same communities faced greater injustice and economic distress long before there was a COVID-19, in the coming weeks we’ll launch another \$10 million in capital funds to help build back commercial corridors and provide more opportunity, stability, and jobs for residents left with less for far too long.”

Additionally, the State of Illinois and its community partners kicked off the next phase of the \$25 million RDC program – releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP) that will make \$10 million available for corridor improvement projects planned for later this year to address the ongoing needs of impacted communities.

“Governor Pritzker and DCEO are working to strategically deploy capital and emergency assistance to small businesses and communities experiencing extreme economic hardship during the pandemic,” **said Acting Director of DCEO, Sylvia Garcia**. “Through the Rebuild Distressed Communities program, we’re delivering projects that will provide an economic boost for the places most affected by civil unrest last year. In addition to revitalizing small businesses that experienced damages, we’re making an additional \$10 million available

for corridor improvement projects to spark long term economic investment for the communities that need it most.”

### **Small Business Grants**

RDC grant recipients reflect a range of sectors including small and family-owned businesses, restaurants, medical offices, retail and others. Awards averaged \$29,000, with funding eligible for reimbursement on the cost of damages, insurance deductibles, and construction work related to repairs as a result of civil unrest. A full list of Round 1 RDC small business grant recipients can be found on [DCEO's website](#).

The State of Illinois teamed up with local organizations, LISC and CNI, last year to manage the grant review process. Working with these local partners, DCEO has developed a process to connect small businesses with qualified contractors to perform repair work funded under the program – and has prioritized local and BEP contractors to ensure multiple local community benefits. New construction projects will be based on the project scope determined by contractors performing the work.

“The civil unrest of 2020, in conjunction with the pandemic, have created havoc for many businesses especially for small businesses in communities of color,” **said Meghan Harte, Executive Director of LISC Chicago**. “In many cases, these businesses had already been financially stressed by systemic issues affecting access to capital for startup and reinvestment. The success of these small businesses is critical to sustaining and building thriving communities. The resources from DCEO are critical for small business owners to keep their doors open and serve their communities.”

Applications were reviewed and evaluated according to the extent of property damage, with preference given to business types and locations facing some of the most pronounced impacts of civil unrest in 2020. Additional funding for small businesses is expected in the weeks ahead, with Round 2 awards currently under review.

“There have only been two times in my 47 years of running Roseland Pharmacy when I’ve said, ‘I will never forget this’,” **said Howard Bolling, owner of Roseland Pharmacy**. “The first was when I discovered that my store had been turned upside down after it was looted last May. I was sure then that I would never be able to reopen, and I dreaded the thought of leaving the community I loved without a pharmacy for even basic medications. The second time was when I was able to tell my customers that I recently received a \$22,000 grant from the State of Illinois that would allow the same drugstore their parents and grandchildren relied on to remain a fixture at 11254 South Michigan.”

“This grant is vital. If it were not for this grant opportunity we would have to potentially close our doors or take on extreme business debt in order to maintain operations. This grant has saved a 50 year old business that is an intricate part of the community. We are looking forward to using these funds to reopen our doors to the neighbors, bring our employees back and be a catalyst here in Garfield Park,” **said Latasha & Chris Jones, owners of Mary’s BBQ**.

“The grant from the State was the lifeline we needed to make repairs which allowed us to bring back 15 employees and to promptly reopen the doors at all four Subway Restaurants on the city’s south and west sides,” **said Sam Patel, owner and franchisee**.

### **Corridor Improvements RFP**

To support continued investments in communities, DCEO and its partners are launching an RFP marking the next phase of the program – Corridor Improvements for Rebuild Distressed Communities. This subset of the program will support capital investment in commercial corridors that have experienced property damage.

The goal is to fund projects that will spark long-term economic growth while helping further support the economic recovery of small businesses affected by civil unrest.

DCEO and partners are calling on community-based organizations in communities that experienced civil unrest to apply for \$10 million made available through the RFP – including, but not limited to nonprofits, local governments, business improvement districts, special service areas, and others. DCEO and partners will first release a pre-solicitation and will begin accepting applications on Monday April 5<sup>th</sup> through June 7<sup>th</sup>. For more information on the pre-solicitation RFP or to attend an informational webinar held by LISC and CNI on March 26, please visit [DCEO's website](#).

“The RFP’s funding is an important tool for repairing and enhancing the commercial corridors and increasing economic opportunities for small businesses which our communities rely upon,” **said Ciere Boatright, Vice President, CNI, Real Estate and Inclusion.**

This announcement is the latest in a series of grants made available by the State of Illinois for small businesses and communities hit hardest by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Since March of last year, DCEO has deployed more than \$1 billion in funding opportunities – including the Business Interruption Grants program, the largest of its kind in the nation economic support program which provided 9,000 grants totaling \$275 million for businesses across the state. DCEO and its community navigator partners continue to assist small businesses in need by unlocking access to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and other federal programs.

For more information on supports available for small businesses, or to learn more about ongoing capital programs, please visit [DCEO's website](#) or follow the department on social @IllinoisDCEO.

# # #

#### **About LISC:**

With residents and partners, LISC forges resilient and inclusive communities of opportunity across America — great places to live, work, visit, do business and raise families. Since 1979, LISC has invested \$20 billion to build or rehab 400,500 affordable homes and apartments and develop 66.8 million square feet of retail, community and educational space. For more information, please visit [LISC Chicago](#) and [LISC Central Illinois](#) website.

#### **About Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives (CNI):**

CNI is a nonprofit community and economic development organization working with stakeholders to identify and implement high-impact projects for revitalizing low-to-moderate income communities. CNI coordinates public and private investments, acting as a developer and as a lender to encourage opportunities for combatting community deterioration: growing small businesses; creating training and jobs; and developing, renovating, and preserving affordable housing. Since its inception in 2010, CNI has been revitalizing the Pullman neighborhood and other disinvested urban neighborhoods through use of New Market Tax Credits (NMTTC), equity investments, and micro-loans through its Certified Financial Development Institution subsidiary, the CNI Micro Finance Group (CNIMFG). CNIMFG has loaned more than \$3 million to 150 small businesses in under-resourced neighborhoods to create opportunities that help build sustainable communities and improve peoples’ lives.