



COVID-19 Assistance for Commercial Watermen and the Seafood Industry

The Hogan Administration acknowledges that the seafood industry is an iconic Maryland industry with commercial landing values over \$82 million. The seafood industry also contributes over \$600 million to Maryland's economy. Given the economic hardships posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, commercial watermen who are self-employed may be eligible for the following relief programs:

Small Business Administration (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)

The Paycheck Protection Program is a loan designed to provide a direct incentive for small businesses to keep their workers on the payroll. SBA will forgive loans if all employees are kept on the payroll for eight weeks and the money is used for payroll, rent, mortgage interest, or utilities. The Paycheck Protection Program will be available through June 30, 2020.

This program is for any small business with less than 500 employees (including sole proprietorships, independent contractors and self-employed persons), private nonprofit organization or 501(c)(19) veterans organizations affected by coronavirus/COVID-19.

Lenders may begin processing loan applications as soon as April 3, 2020.

For more information or to apply, visit sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/paycheck-protection-program-ppp.

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Relief Funding

The CARES Act includes \$300 million in relief funding for commercial watermen in the United States. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has been designated as the lead agency to administer this funding, but no decisions have been made yet regarding eligibility or how the program will work. Our departments will continue to monitor this and share additional information as it becomes available.

Unemployment Insurance Benefit Provisions

THE CARES Act adds sole proprietors and self-employed individuals to the list of those eligible to receive unemployment benefits. If your employment or business has been impacted by the coronavirus, please read our [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#). To learn more about the work search requirement exemption, visit the [Work Search FAQs](#).

The Maryland Department of Labor is collaborating with the U.S. Department of Labor to create new systems, modify current technical systems, train staff, and conduct tests before administering the new federal programs. This will take time, but please note that if you are eligible, you WILL receive these new benefits back to the earliest date of your eligibility. To receive an email once the new application is ready, please [sign up here](#).

Business Entities

Business entities such as restaurants, aquaculture operations, distributors and wholesalers may qualify for the programs listed above as well as new programs announced by Governor Hogan and the Small Business Administration. These resources include low interest loans, tax payment assistance, and other resources. For more information, visit [Maryland's Business Express website](#).

Keep Calm and Carry Out Campaign

In an effort to support Maryland's seafood markets and assist restaurants who are hard hit by the pandemic, our departments have partnered with the Maryland Restaurant Association on a social media and marketing campaign called, "Keep Calm and Carry Out." The goal of this campaign is to encourage Maryland citizens to ask for Maryland seafood and Maryland agricultural products when they order carry-out or delivery from a restaurant.

