



## MEDIA RELEASE

**For Release:** SUNDAY May 31, 2020

**Contact:** Commissioner Vicki Baker 509-424-1394 [vicki.baker@co.yakima.wa.us](mailto:vicki.baker@co.yakima.wa.us)

**Photos:** Board of Yakima County Commissioners, Yakima County Photo  
(Left to Right) Commissioner Ron Anderson (District 2), Commissioner Vicki Baker (District 1), Chairman Norm Childress (District 3)

### **Yakima County Commissioners Announce \$2.8 Million Immediate “Main Street” Emergency Relief**

YAKIMA, WA – The Board of Yakima County Commissioners are committing \$2.8 million in CARES funding for immediate emergency relief for local businesses. The new program will provide grants to Yakima County businesses. Additional details will be released later this week.

“We hope this can be a lifeline to help keep our main streets alive,” Chairman Norm Childress said. “the Commissioners do not want to see businesses shuttered due to COVID-19 restrictions for reopening under the Governor’s current phased programs.”

“We are working to help businesses keep their lights on and we encourage all the cities in Yakima County to join with us in committing CARES dollars to help rescue local businesses,” Commissioner Ron Anderson said.

The \$2.8 million in new funding is in addition to the \$187,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds, which are targeted to assist “micro businesses” and low-income business owners. The County has also secured \$660,707 from the Commerce Department for resources to reduce transmission among people experiencing homelessness, and to assist with other initiatives to provide improved sanitization and PPE supplies.

In addition to devoting needed rescue funds for businesses, Commissioner Vicki Baker announced the formation of a community coalition that will be tasked with assisting Yakima County small businesses, churches, and other organizations with their COVID-compliant reopening plans.

The task force will comprise of members from the Yakima Chamber of Commerce, the Yakima Community Development Association, the Central Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and other community partners, along with individual volunteers.

“It is important to me that this is a private sector, community-led initiative,” Commissioner Baker said. “We have amazing community and private sector partners. Every day I receive calls from business owners who are eager to reopen but need help navigating the Governor’s rules for their business.”

“As a local business owner operating an essential grocery store, I have first-hand experience with COVID-19 safety protocols for staff and customers and I can see the benefit to making business trainers available to help business owners be prepared. “

“I have worked alongside City of Yakima Mayor Patricia Byers to advocate for local businesses that were excluded from the Governor’s original essential business classification. We received great business plans with exemplary health and safety protocols. We want to focus on the future and have our businesses fully ready when the Governor opens up Yakima County for business.”

Task force volunteers will offer a risk assessment, health and safety guidance, and provide reopening support resources, so that businesses are ready to open immediately when the green light comes from the State.

Commissioner Baker remarked, “I know we are all feeling frustrated right now. The Yakima County Commissioners can’t overrule the Governor’s directives, but we have requested local control. And we will continue to advocate for our community and work to secure funding and resources to help weather this storm in the meantime.”

“We have additional local emergency assistance funds available now to help our local businesses survive,” she added. “Now more than ever we must have our community come together, even when we don’t all agree, and we are receiving conflicting information. Now is the time to show great local leadership, teamwork, and a spirit of Community Unity that will help our local businesses get their doors reopened.” Commissioner Baker said.

####