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## **Retail Association of Maine & Maine Grocers and Food Producers Association Launch Maine Business Relief Fund**

*Aiding Small Businesses Affected by Recent Storm*

Augusta, ME (January 2, 2024)— In the wake of December 18<sup>th</sup>'s devastating storm, affectionately dubbed the "Grinch," the Retail Association of Maine (RAM) and the Maine Grocers and Food Producers Association (MGFPA) are taking proactive steps to support the numerous businesses affected across the state. The storm brought severe flooding, road washouts, and prolonged power outages, resulting in substantial losses for retailers, grocers, restaurants, and other small enterprises.

Inspired by the successful relief efforts in Vermont following a similar catastrophe, RAM and MGFPA are proud to announce the launch of the **Maine Business Relief Fund**. This initiative aims to provide crucial financial assistance to Maine's small businesses in their recovery from the storm's impact. The fund will offer grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000 to cover expenses such as equipment replacement, operating expenses, supplies, and assistance with cleanup, etc. The goal is to help meet immediate needs until further support is available.

"Maine's retailers and small businesses have been through a lot for a few years now, but a storm like this during the final week of holiday sales was an incredible blow to many of our small businesses. It is our hope that the Maine Business Relief Fund will help provide some necessary support to help clean up, replenish lost inventory, and help get them back on track in 2024," stated Curtis Picard, President and CEO of the Retail Association of Maine.

"A number of Maine's independent grocers lost perishable food, and equipment due to flooding, or prolonged power outages as a result of the December 18<sup>th</sup> storm. Grocers operate on very small margins, so providing them a little help will go a long way for these critical businesses in Maine's rural communities," added Christine Cummings, Executive Director of Maine Grocers and Food Producers Association.

"The severe storm and flooding was devastating for so many, including many businesses that suffered significant losses at the worst possible time – right before the holiday," said Governor Janet Mills. "The Maine Business Relief Fund offers a beacon of hope during this incredibly difficult moment by providing grants that

will help small businesses clean up, replenish inventory, and come back stronger. I am proud to stand with the Retail Association of Maine and the Maine Grocers and Food Producers Association in support of this much-needed initiative, and I thank them for their work and partnership to support the economic backbone of our state, our small businesses.”

**Program Highlights:**

- Modeled after Vermont's relief program, which raised \$800,000 and distributed grants of up to \$10,000 to impacted businesses.
- Businesses will be eligible for financial grants of up to \$10,000 as early as January 2024.
- Applications will open January 4, 2024 at 10 AM through January 31, 2024.

**Early Commitments and Matching Funds:**

- We are proud to have secured commitments from Hancock Lumber, Mardens and other businesses, and announce a commitment of \$250,000 in matching funds from an anonymous private donor, emphasizing the significant impact of collective contributions.
- We are proud to partner with the Maine Tourism Association, Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce, Mid-Maine Area Chamber of Commerce, the Forks Chamber of Commerce, the Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce, Maine Development Foundation and others.

RAM and MGFPA work closely with Maine’s small businesses and recognize the crucial role they play in our communities, and are pleased to facilitate the necessary support through this crisis. Our associations alongside our partners in the hospitality and tourism industry have strong lines of communication with our members and state leaders. The fund is proudly supported by Governor Mills and DECD Commissioner Heather Johnson, various trade associations, chambers of commerce, and business associations.

RAM and MGFPA invite all businesses and community members to make a tax-deductible contribution to the ‘Maine Business Relief Fund’ established under the Maine Business Education Partnership, a 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions can be made payable to the Maine Business Relief Fund and mailed to 45 Melville Street, Augusta, ME 04330.

**To apply for financial relief and to learn more visit:** [www.mainebusinessreliefund.com](http://www.mainebusinessreliefund.com)

The Retail Association of Maine and the Maine Grocers and Food Producers Association extend their heartfelt appreciation to the community for its support during this challenging time. Together, we can make a significant impact on the road to recovery for Maine's small businesses.

**About the Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association**

The Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association is a business trade association representing main street businesses: independently owned and operated grocery stores, supermarkets, food and beverage producers and processors, wholesalers and distributors and allied service companies. We are a community dedicated to the prosperity of Maine’s grocery and food producer industry through excellence in advocacy, networking and education. For more information on the Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association please visit [mgfpa.org](http://mgfpa.org) or call 207-622-4461.

**About the Retail Association of Maine**

The Retail Association of Maine is a statewide, non-profit trade association representing more than 350 businesses in the state, from large chains to small independent retailers. Incorporated in 1937, the Retail Association of Maine serves as the voice of retailers in Maine and concentrates on preserving the state's strong retail climate. For more information on the Retail Association of Maine, please visit the website at [retailmaine.org](http://retailmaine.org) or call the Retail Association of Maine offices at 207-623-1149.

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