



March 20, 2020

STATEMENT FROM CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, MONTGOMERY COUNTY ACTION COUNCIL AND INDEPENDENCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE RELATED TO COVID-19 ECONOMIC IMPACT

(March 20, 2020) – As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage the world’s economy, Montgomery County and Independence community leaders are closely monitoring the impact on area employers and exploring ways to support all those affected.

Processing this week’s announcement by Textron Aviation of a temporary furlough of employees statewide and a market-driven adjustment in production, the City of Independence, Montgomery County Action Council and the Independence Chamber of Commerce have offered a unified message of support.

“We are 100 percent committed to our area businesses and their employees and stand ready to assist in every way within our power to help them weather these unprecedented circumstances,” said Kelly Passauer, Interim Independence City Manager. “We fully grasp the severity of the situation and understand that immediate and longer-term impacts will be felt by businesses everywhere. In partnership with our state and county agencies, we pledge to explore all opportunities to develop resources for displaced workers and provide support for at-risk companies.”

Trisha Purdon, Executive Director of Montgomery County Action Council, applauded Textron’s furlough actions to ensure a safe workplace and help curb the spread of the virus. “Such efforts to mitigate and contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus through social distancing, while challenging today, will ultimately make a difference for our state and community residents in the future.”

Purdon said she also has been in communication with leaders at the Kansas Department of Commerce to assess the current crisis not only from a health perspective, but also in regard to economic impact and to help identify resources to help. Of particular note, she said, is today’s announcement by the State of Kansas to provide emergency loan funding for businesses in the hospitality industry, which is among the hardest hit. The Hospitality Industry Relief Emergency (HIRE) fund will provide short-term, zero-interest loans up to \$20,000 that can be used as operating capital for restaurants, bars, hotels and other hospitality businesses who’ve lost revenue due to the crisis. More information on the loan program is available at www.kansascommerce.gov/HIREfund.

Lisa Wilson, President of the Independence Chamber of Commerce, echoed Passauer and Purdon’s concerns for the economic health of area companies. “As we watch the progression of health and economic crises



INDEPENDENCE KANSAS

locally and globally, we are keeping a close eye on our businesses large and small that contribute to the fabric of our region.”

Purdon referenced a “layoff spreadsheet” tracking tool available through the Kansas Department of Labor that should be used by any business implementing an employee reduction at this time and will help employees access unemployment benefits in a timely fashion. Submitting the spreadsheet, she explained, does not mean the employer is responsible for the affected employees’ unemployment claims. It will be the responsibility of each employee to file weekly claims and be aware of all eligibility and reporting requirements in order to receive payment.

“If any Kansas business is facing furloughs or reduced employment due to virus mitigation efforts or economic pressures, it is extremely important to utilize the Kansas Department of Labor layoff spreadsheet to help employees receive unemployment benefits in the most efficient manner possible,” she said.

“Also, we want to hear from any and all area businesses who are concerned about their immediate viability so we can help them be proactive to minimize the damage and push through for a brighter future.”

Purdon may be contacted at tpurdon@actioncouncil.com; 620-331-3830, and additional information, including the unemployment tracking spreadsheet, is available by visiting www.kansasemployer.gov/uitax/Tax/LayoffSelect.aspx.

###