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Chambers want Sac County to pay businesses up to \$2,000 for following Covid-19 rules

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A coalition of 12 local chambers of commerce is urging Sacramento County leaders to consider new financial incentives for businesses that comply with Covid-19 public health orders.

Representatives from the Folsom Chamber of Commerce presented the \$4.7 million proposal to the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors at their meeting on Tuesday.

The program would be aimed at rewarding businesses that comply with public health orders and would provide reimbursements that are incurred as a result of their compliance, according to Jim Lofgren, a government affairs consultant for the Folsom Chamber of Commerce, who presented the plan to the supervisors.

“Many restaurant owners rented tents for outdoors dining just prior to the holidays,” Lofgren said, in a prepared statement. “Shortly thereafter, outdoor dining was prohibited by a public health order. Under the proposed program, these owners could seek reimbursement for that expense.”



FELICIA ALVAREZ | SACRAMENTO BUSINESS JOURNAL

A view of outdoor dining along R Street in Sacramento. A proposed program would reimburse businesses for expenses they faced to comply with Covid-19 guidelines, such as sanitation and tents.

The proposal calls for businesses to submit their receipts for coronavirus-related expenses, and Sacramento County would give checks up to \$2,000 to reimburse them for costs.

“This program provides a 'carrot' rather than a 'stick' approach to encourage and reward businesses to comply with public health orders,” Lofgren said.

Throughout the pandemic, Sacramento County has taken up an “education first” approach, rather than a punitive one. In November, Sacramento County had considered fines for businesses that violate public health orders, but tabled the idea after receiving strong pushback from the public.

The program would leverage about half of the \$9.5 million in unspent CARES Act funding that the county has available, according to the proposal's summary. From there, the proposed \$4.7 million would be split across local cities and unincorporated parts of the county.

Under the proposal, the city of Sacramento would receive \$1.5 million of the funding and unincorporated parts of the county would receive \$1.8 million, while smaller cities like Folsom and Rancho Cordova would receive \$243,984 and \$225,261, respectively.

Sacramento County is the only county in the four-county region that has not put funds toward small business relief. Other cities and counties used portions of their funds from the federal Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act to fuel grant and loan programs aimed at keeping businesses afloat during the pandemic.

County officials were not immediately available for comment, but during the Board of Supervisors' meeting three supervisors expressed support for the proposal.

The 12 chambers that are advocating for the program include the [Citrus Heights Chamber of Commerce](#), [East Sacramento Chamber of Commerce](#), [Elk Grove Chamber of Commerce](#), [Folsom Chamber of Commerce](#), [North Sacramento Chamber of Commerce](#), [Sacramento Rainbow Chamber of Commerce](#), [Rancho Cordova Chamber of Commerce](#), [Sacramento Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce](#), [Sacramento Black Chamber of Commerce](#),

Sacramento Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce and the Slavic-American Chamber of Commerce, according to Lofgren.

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