



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Office of the Governor

R. Brian Ball  
Secretary of Commerce and Trade

January 10, 2022

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam  
Governor of Virginia  
Patrick Henry Building, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
1111 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Members of the General Assembly  
General Assembly Building  
900 East Main Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor Northam and Members of the General Assembly,

Pursuant to §2.2-205.1 of the Code of Virginia, I am pleased to submit the annual report of the Economic Crisis Strike Force. I serve as chairman of the strike force, and several cabinet members and agency directors are members. The statute requires the Economic Crisis Strike Force to report on its activities each year.

Chapters 79 and 80 of the 2006 Acts of Assembly codified the Economic Crisis Strike Force to “respond as needed to economic disasters in Virginia communities by (i) immediately providing a single point of contact for citizens in affected communities to assist with accessing available government and private sector services and resources; (ii) assisting localities in developing short-term and long-term strategies for addressing the economic crisis; and (iii) identifying opportunities for workforce retaining, job creation, and new investment.” Subsection E of the Act defines “economic disaster” as an employment loss of at least 5% during the immediately preceding six-month period, the closure or downsizing of a major regional employer in an economically distressed area, a natural disaster or act of terrorism for which the Governor has declared a state of emergency, or other economic crisis situations, which in the opinion of the Governor adversely affect the welfare of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

During 2021, the Economic Crisis Strike Force (“ECSF”) met one time on April 13, 2021 regarding the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and its impacts on Virginia’s citizens and businesses.

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Page 2

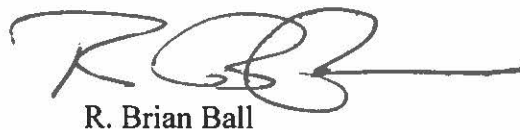
The membership of the ECSF included the Secretaries and Agency representatives as required by §2.2-205.1 of the Code, but due to the magnitude of the COVID-19 crisis, additional Secretaries and Agencies were invited to attend and participate in the work of the ECSF. On a regular basis, the ECSF received reports from numerous agencies, including the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Department of Education, the Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the Virginia Employment Commission and the Virginia Tourism Corporation.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Virginia's economy remains robust and growing, thanks – in part – to the quick work of the Governor and General Assembly, advised by the Economic Crisis Strike Force, to deploy federal and state resources in a targeted and efficient manner. Through the Rent Relief Program, we have delivered \$520 million to more than 75,000 households, though tremendous need still remains. We have recently opened the Mortgage Relief Program, which will provide similar relief to homeowners. Rebuild VA has deployed more than \$200 million to nearly 5,000 small businesses impacted by COVID-19.

As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the glaring inequities between those who have access to broadband internet, and those who do not. Broadband access has been a priority throughout Governor Northam's term, and I'm pleased to report that Virginia recently awarded more than \$750 million in grants to public-private partnerships across the Commonwealth. These projects will close more than 90% of the digital divide, putting Virginia on track to become one of the first states to achieve universal broadband coverage.

The ECSF stands ready to respond to economic disasters and assist citizens with access to state resources. Please feel free to contact me if you require additional information about this important program.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Brian Ball', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

R. Brian Ball

RBB/cls