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## ***SENATOR CARDIN JOINS SBA AND MARYLAND OFFICIALS TO ANNOUNCE NEW INITIATIVE TO HELP BALTIMORE INNER-CITY BUSINESSES***

*Baltimore is one of 11 Cities Selected for Emerging 200 Program*

BALTIMORE – U.S. Senator **Benjamin L. Cardin** (D-MD) today joined with U.S. Congressman **John Sarbanes** (D-MD), Baltimore City Mayor **Sheila Dixon**, and officials from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to announce a new initiative that will identify and provide resources to 20 Baltimore inner-city businesses that exhibit a high potential for growth.

The SBA has targeted Baltimore and 10 other cities to participate in the *Emerging 200 Initiative*. The goal of the program is to identify 200 inner-city businesses across the nation that could benefit from strategies to help build a sustainable business in an inner-city location. The Initiative will focus on providing selected businesses with organization management, growth strategies and management, market development, and strategic planning.

“Small businesses are the heart of our economy and I am a strong supporter of the SBA’s efforts to reach out and provide support that will enable small businesses to grow,” said **Senator Cardin**, a member of the Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship. “The selection of Baltimore to participate in the *Emerging 200 Initiative* is a vote of confidence in Baltimore’s strong small business community and the many resources that are available here to help businesses succeed.”

“Selection for the Emerging 200 Initiative is a wonderful opportunity for Baltimore’s small business community,” said **Congressman Sarbanes**. “Successful businesses can leverage this kind of federal investment to really kick start growth.”

“As everyone here knows, successful small businesses are economic engines capable of powering entire cities forward,” said **Mayor Dixon**. “The Emerging 200 initiative will help them immensely by delivering expert instruction, mentoring and guidance.”

“We’re pleased, along with our co-sponsors, to bring *Emerging 200* and its MBA-style environment and program, to small businesses in Baltimore,” said **Stephen D. Umberger**, director of the SBA’s Baltimore District Office. “We hope eligible small businesses will take advantage of this tremendous opportunity.”

There were 23 cities nationwide that applied to take part in this initiative, but only 11 were chosen. In addition to Baltimore, other *Emerging 200* cities are: Boston, Philadelphia, Des Moines, Memphis, Atlanta, Chicago, Milwaukee, Albuquerque, New Orleans, and Oakland.

Participation in *Emerging 200* is free to qualifying businesses. Criteria for participation includes having been in business for a minimum of three years, \$400,000 or more in gross annual revenues, and a business location within the geographic boundaries defined by the SBA. Participation will be limited to only 20 businesses in Baltimore and 220 businesses nationwide. Applications must be received by Friday, May 30, 2008.

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