

December 10, 2020

Dear President-Elect Biden and Vice President-Elect Harris:

We congratulate you on your election, and we appreciate your recent meeting with us. Mayors have been on the frontlines of this virus, and we understand the virus knows no city borders nor political party. Across the country, we represent tens of millions of residents at a time when we are facing a nationwide surge in cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in every part of the country. The federal government's inaction has required local and state officials to take additional measures to save lives. We also know these actions have deep economic consequences for workers and businesses.

Now and in the initial days of your administration, your leadership will be critical to helping our residents and businesses through this unprecedented pandemic and economic crisis.

For months, we have urged Congress and the current administration to pass a COVID-19 relief and a bold recovery bill, and we know you will work with Congress to deliver continued relief throughout this crisis as well as long-term economic recovery. While direct state and local funding to replace lost revenue is our biggest concern, relief must also focus on our small businesses and workers who need assistance for housing, meals, child care, unemployment, and direct assistance for the most impacted communities. We are also hopeful relief will go towards public health needs, cities, and states who are on the frontlines of the crisis.

In addition, we stand prepared to implement a robust recovery bill that prioritizes climate, equity, and job creation as we invest in infrastructure, housing, transportation, and workforce training so our cities build back better, more resilient, and more just. Climate action can help accelerate economic recovery and enhance equity through the use of new technologies and the creation of new industries and new jobs. These will drive wider benefits for our residents, workers, students, businesses, and visitors.

As your administration builds an agenda for the initial days in office, we want to urge you to consider the following executive actions that could provide immediate relief to our residents and businesses:

- **Continue Public Health Emergency Designation for FEMA Disaster Relief.** FEMA has been a critical lifeline for cities, but local governments do not have certainty further than a month ahead if FEMA disaster relief will continue. It is our hope that we can streamline and expedite the burdensome reimbursement process as well, considering many of our reoccurring expenses.
- **Eliminate Cost Share for FEMA and Expand Work Eligible for Public Assistance.** Although city and state revenues are decimated, cities are taking on new costs to respond to the pandemic. Many local governments are shouldering local costs of responding to the pandemic without full reimbursement or are not reimbursed for many COVID-19 related activities such as PPE for essential city services, and costs for supplies for vaccinations and testing.
- **Support Local Vaccine Distribution and Infrastructure.** As vaccines potentially become available in the near future, cities need direct funding and policy guidance to build a distribution network that can quickly and safely reach our essential workers, most vulnerable populations, and all of our residents working in concert with other state and local officials and stakeholders.
- **Increase Flexibility and Capacity for Testing.** The federal government should distribute its rapid testing stockpile with cities for pilot programs as they are doing with states, ensure that

insurance reimbursement process is expedited and there is billing conformity, designate full-time on the ground CDC liaisons in major testing hubs, and provide direct funding to cities for testing.

- **National Mask Mandate.** For months, we have known that wearing masks save lives. We support your plan to ensure there is consistent mask usage in every city and every state as it will save lives.
- **Extend and Strengthen National Eviction Moratorium and Mortgage Relief.** Protecting millions of renters from losing stable homes is a critical public health necessity to contain COVID-19. We support extending the CDC's moratorium for at least six months. It should also be expanded to create a universal moratorium that does not require a tenant declaration, applies to all stages and types of eviction processes, and provides a viable enforcement mechanism through a national hotline. We also support all forms of housing assistance and rent relief the federal government can provide.
- **Utilize Defense Production Act for Supplies for Testing, Vaccinations, and PPE.** We support your plans to invoke the Defense Production Act to create a more robust supply chain. Many of our local manufacturers stand ready to assist in this crisis.
- **Adjust the Paycheck Protection Program.** Provide more flexible terms and prioritize funding to serve small businesses, particularly in the hardest hit sectors like full-service restaurants, nightlife, personal and fitness services, and small retail. Special emphasis should be placed on minority owned small businesses and minority lending institutions.
- **Extend and Expand Unemployment for Workers.** Provide additional weekly benefits to workers collecting unemployment benefits and additional funding to state unemployment systems to extend the length of benefit. Future coronavirus legislation should extend the ability for all workers to collect unemployment benefits, including independent contractors and undocumented immigrants.
- **Extend Paid Sick and Family Leave.** The Families First Coronavirus Relief Act required many employers to provide workers with two weeks of coronavirus-related sick leave at full pay and up to 12 weeks of family and medical leave to care for family members at two-thirds pay. Now, tens of millions of workers stand to lose access to federally mandated paid sick and family leave at the end of December. While we urge Congress should pass comprehensive paid sick and family leave legislation, regulations should be issued to extend these benefits for as many workers as possible.
- **Student Loan Forgiveness.** Students loan debt is the second-highest form of household debt in the country, exacerbating the racial wealth gap and disproportionately impacting women. Extending loan forgiveness to more low-wage earners will provide needed relief to the workforce and boost the economy.
- **Resources for Reopening Schools.** Include technical assistance to assist school districts with planning and operations, including needs related but not limited to teacher, broadband and Wi-Fi hotspot deployment to help urban and rural students, staff, and student PPE; equipment to ensure adherence to public health recommendations (e.g., plexiglass), access to testing, secure

technology for contact tracing, paid time off for vaccinations if needed, safe transportation options, and support for teachers' and families' physical and emotional health.

While these are a few initial ideas, we hope that your administration and its Office of Intergovernmental Affairs will share more consistent and regular information and data with mayors, local elected officials, and state leaders. America's mayors stand ready to work with your transition team and new administration on additional ideas to support our cities, residents and businesses.

Sincerely,

Mayor Jenny A. Durkan
Seattle, Washington

Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot
Chicago, Illinois

Acting Mayor Austin Quinn-Davidson
Anchorage, Alaska

Mayor Ted Wheeler
Portland, Oregon

Mayor Bill de Blasio
New York, New York

Mayor Michael B. Hancock
Denver, Colorado

Mayor Lauren McLean
Boise, Idaho

Mayor John Giles
Mesa, Arizona

Mayor Sam Liccardo
San Jose, California

Mayor Kirk Caldwell
Honolulu, Hawaii

Mayor Kate Gallego
Phoenix, Arizona

Mayor Regina Romero
Tucson, Arizona

Mayor Nan Whaley
Dayton, Ohio

Mayor Eric Garcetti
Los Angeles, California

Mayor Daniel Horrigan
Akron, Ohio

Mayor Libby Schaaf
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