

MURIEL BOWSER
MAYOR

July 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy:

As Mayor, I am proud to represent 706,000 residents who make Washington, DC their home, but I also graciously accept the serious charge of safeguarding the employees of the federal government and the millions of visitors that come to the National Capital Region each year. It is not lost on me that our response to mitigate the coronavirus plays an important role in the federal government's operations. Thus, equitable funding for Washington, DC not only affects our residents, but also impacts the National Capital Region and the nation.

In March, I issued an Executive Order declaring a Public Health Emergency, and my team worked hard to mitigate the spread of the deadly coronavirus. I assembled a bipartisan committee of seasoned professionals to develop a reopening plan and establish a set of metrics to guide us through four phases of reopening based, in part, on the White House Coronavirus Taskforce memorandum. Due to these efforts and the commitment of our residents and employers, DC moved into Phase Two of our reopening plan on June 22, 2020. Since then we have continued overall trends toward low transmission and positivity rates, manageable capacities for our hospitals, and staffed up a contact tracing team. We also provide direct testing access at 14 sites throughout every corner of the District six days a week. To date, these sites have tested over 140,000 individuals, including 40,000 non-DC residents. According to the Johns Hopkins University, the District of Columbia ranks sixth amongst states and territories for tests provided per 100,000 residents¹.

Some notable statistics underscore the District's commitment to slowing the spread of COVID-19, but they also highlight the financial costs we absorb on behalf of surrounding jurisdictions and states. For example, DC has spent roughly \$17 million on building and maintaining our testing capacity, but nearly 30% of those who come to our testing sites do not reside in the District. Furthermore, our concerted efforts to build medical surge in our hospitals this past spring was aided by a \$25 million investment in those facilities, but Maryland and Virginia residents routinely utilize the District's hospitals at a level equal to roughly half of the District's healthcare capacity at any given time.

Our continued ability to contain the spread of the coronavirus, especially as we begin to reopen public and private spaces, is heavily reliant upon equitable funding in the next tranche of coronavirus funding. In

¹ <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/testing/states-comparison>

particular, I ask that the next coronavirus funding bill include the US House of Representatives approved measures important to the District of Columbia:

- Language amending the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act” (CARES Act), to make the District whole in the amount of \$755 million to correct the misclassification in the CARES Act.
- Provisions included in the "Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act” (HEROES Act) as passed by the U.S. House of Representatives to provide fiscal relief to the District of Columbia at each level of government. Unlike other jurisdictions that can share responsibility and resources when addressing the coronavirus, we have the responsibility of providing all levels of the response, including state, county, and local responses. Funding using the HEROES Act framework would help ensure that the District of Columbia is sufficiently resourced to address the ongoing effects of the pandemic.
- Language clarifying that the District of Columbia can fully participate in the Municipal Liquidity Facility. While the District can apply for the new short-term borrowing fund to help address cash flow concerns, it is limited by the Home Rule Act in being able to borrow in a meaningful way to truly address our cash flow needs. It is critical that the District has unfettered access to the municipal securities market and the associated flow of credit and liquidity to provide essential public services to its citizens.

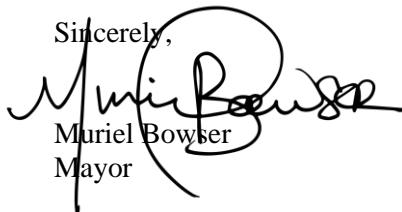
The coronavirus has already had a lasting impact on our economy. DC’s Fiscal Year 2021 Local Budget Act of 2020, currently being considered by the DC Council, reflects a conservative estimate for a loss of \$1.5 billion in revenues over this and next fiscal year alone. We have fully obligated the \$495 million in CARES Act Coronavirus relief funds and we have also used our emergency and contingency reserves of nearly \$450 million to respond to the pandemic.

In addition to the impact on the District’s revenue, a sunset of the \$600 weekly unemployment benefit will create a devastating financial impact on our local residents. Our residents need this funding to keep their families afloat. It would be unconscionable to leave them without this vital lifeline. The District already faces hundreds of millions of dollars in expenses for public safety and health personnel costs, health care services, small business assistance, matches for public assistance programs including SNAP and Medicaid, administering unemployment benefits, and the costs associated with reopening the District’s public and private spaces. Having to assume the cost of basic needs of thousands of citizens would be too monumental for our local economy to bear.

The District of Columbia government, its healthcare professionals, and its citizens have risen to the challenge and developed a comprehensive response to the coronavirus pandemic. The District cannot sustain its current response without significant federal support. As the seat of the federal government, whose staff, including your own, come from across the country, we are uniquely concerned about the possibility of a new wave of cases facing the District in the coming weeks and months. Equitable funding is critical to ensuring the District of Columbia can continue to respond to the ever-evolving circumstances rapidly and efficiently.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or my Senior Advisor, Beverly Perry at Beverly.Perry@dc.gov.

Sincerely,



Muriel Bowser
Mayor

Cc: Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton