



City of Seattle

Mayor Jenny A. Durkan

The Honorable Patty Murray
2264 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
2264 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Pramila Jayapal
1501 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murray, Senator Cantwell, Representative Smith and Representative Jayapal:

Thank you for your leadership in advancing Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L. 116-136), which provides critical funding as our city works to support our residents and businesses while maintaining critical services during this nationwide pandemic. We appreciate your efforts to help our city and the nation overcome the public health, economic, and fiscal challenges created by the novel coronavirus. Since the COVID-19 crisis began, we have opened eight hygiene facilities around the city; provided socially distanced shelter capacity and respite and recovery beds for people experiencing homelessness; provided emergency childcare services for essential workers, including health care professionals, first responders, and grocery store workers; and maintaining utility services for all residents during the emergency.

Given these extraordinary efforts, we want to highlight the City's significant funding needs as Congress develops a fourth funding package. Our priorities include:

Maintaining Essential City Services – Increased Funding and Flexibility for the Coronavirus Relief Fund

The CARES Act created the Coronavirus Relief Fund, which provides \$150 billion in direct funding for states and localities to address unanticipated expenses related to addressing the coronavirus crisis. This funding is critical and additional funding is essential to ensure that the City can continue to provide core city services, including police, fire, and sanitation. We ask that you provide at least \$750 billion in the next package to address these critical needs.

As a result of the social distancing measures the City has undertaken to help prevent the rapid spread of COVID-19, revenues across the board have declined significantly. These revenues support police, fire, sanitation and other critical city services and jobs. As you consider additional legislation, we also ask that

you provide greater flexibility and clarify that funds can be used to pay for programs that would otherwise be cut because of revenue shortfalls resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. This fiscal climate, combined with legal mandates to maintain balanced city budgets, will make maintaining critical levels of city services and programs extremely challenging. We will be forced to cut programs and projects that are critical to residents. Maintaining these services should be considered a new expense tied directly to the pandemic.

Increased Food Assistance

As a result of the “stay home” measures and significant accompanying job loss, the need for food assistance has never been greater. We urge you to:

- Provide \$1 billion for **The Emergency Food Assistance Program** to ensure that our food banks are able to meet the overwhelming demands for assistance.
- Provide significant additional funding for **SNAP** and increase benefit amounts by 15%. These increased amounts should be sustained until the economy has fully recovered. Further, implementation of "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Requirements for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents" should also be suspended.
- **Senior and Child Nutrition:** Provide additional assistance for senior and child nutrition programs.

Significantly Increase Resources for Housing and Emergency Shelter

The COVID-19 crisis has placed an unprecedented demand on our already limited affordable housing and emergency shelter resources. To address these unique challenges and alleviate this crisis, we urge you to:

- **Increase Rent Stabilization Funding and Create National Rental Housing Stabilization Program:** Provide \$100 billion in rent stabilization funding for the operations of rental properties for property owners experiencing financial hardship due to low- and moderate-income tenants who are unable to pay full rent as a result of COVID financial hardship, including through HOME. Further, rental assistance funding should be provided, including new Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8), to expand rental assistance funds for renters facing financial hardship as a result of COVID-19.
- **Increase Funding for Affordable Housing**
 - **Enhance the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program:** Set the permanent minimum rate at 4% to add certainty for investors and developers over the current floating rate and bring additional private equity to this powerful tool to finance affordable housing. Lower the “50 percent test” to a 25 percent threshold to allow states to stretch their bond allocation over more affordable housing projects.
 - Increase critical funding sources, including CDBG (\$11 billion); HOME; National Housing Trust Fund; HUD 202; and HUD 811.
- **Homeownership Stabilization:** Increase foreclosure assistance and provide funds for mortgage holders for non-federally backed loans.
- **Sheltering the Homeless:** Provide \$11.5 billion for Emergency Shelter Grants and provide funding for staffing, leasing, renting, supplies, cleaning to allow long-term social distancing. Further, as local governments are fighting to address the COVID-19 outbreak on all fronts and

meeting the needs of its vulnerable populations, urge HUD to suspend the Continuum of Care competition and add a year of funding to 2019 grants.

Increase Assistance for Working Families

As more and more families are impacted by the crisis, our safety net is of vital importance.

- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF):** Increase TANF block grants to provide quick cash assistance or short-term emergency assistance.
- **Expand Access to Recovery Rebates and Unemployment Insurance:** Provide additional cash payments to individuals and ensure equitable access to (1) people who pay taxes with an Individual Tax Identification Numbers (ITINs), (2) non-citizen children without a SSN, and (3) minors who are high school- and college-age (ages 17-25) who are claimed as dependents. Further, remove the provisions of the CARES Act that stipulate that people who use ITINs for anyone in the family are excluded from receiving direct cash assistance, and that exclude “non-resident aliens” from receiving unemployment insurance.
- Continue to reduce/remove barriers for low-income and vulnerable populations to receive automatic assistance without additional paperwork.

Sustained Economic Development Support

The impacts of staying home are impacting our economy on every level, from our small businesses to the City as an employer. We ask you to:

- **Expand the Paid and Sick Leave Payroll Tax Credit:** The Families First Coronavirus Response Act requires businesses and public agencies to provide paid emergency and sick leave, but excludes municipalities from receiving a payroll tax credit that is available for businesses. The paid and sick leave payroll tax credit should be expanded so that municipalities are eligible.
- **Stabilize the Municipal Bond Market:** Authorize the Federal Reserve to buy municipal bonds, a key tool to finance necessary infrastructure and public projects, in order to stabilize municipal bond markets.
- **Paycheck Protection Program:** Provide more funding and flexibility for the Paycheck Protection Program to ensure that every qualifying small businesses and non-profit can take advantage of the program
 - Change time limit to cover expenses during initial recovery period
 - Allow for more generous coverage of rent and utility costs
- Expand loan options and eligibility for immigrant business owners and/or independent contractors.
- Automatically include certified Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) and other qualified mission lenders as eligible lenders to participate in loans made under the Paycheck Protection Program.
- Add \$1 billion to the CDFI Fund and provide equity investments for them to stabilize their own loan portfolios which have been hit hard by the crisis. Create a loan buyback program to purchase CDFI loans as was done for the 2009 downturn.
- Create a funding program that specifically targets low-income, immigrant, and minority-owned businesses with less than 5 FTEs that cannot access Small Business Administration (SBA) loans.

Increase Access to Essential Public Health Services

To address the needs of our first responders and community, we urge you to:

- Provide Free testing, treatment, and prevention of COVID-19 for all people regardless of immigration status or insurance.
- Ensure access to adequate personal protective equipment for frontline workers and first responders through national stockpile.

Maintain Critical Utility and Transit Services

At a time when essential workers need transit more than ever, transit systems in Seattle and across the nation are suffering critical revenue shortfalls due to social distancing measures, which may in turn, necessitate major service cuts.

- **Additional funding to support transit:** Additional funding is needed to backfill lost revenue and increased costs (e.g., cleaning, PPE) for transit operators.
- **Rate Assistance for Vulnerable Residents and Utility Funding:** Given the current economic crisis, a new federal program is needed to provide rate assistance for low income residents to help pay for their water service. In addition, the City is committed to providing safe and affordable drinking water and sanitary services to all of its customers during this public health emergency. However, COVID-19 has triggered declining revenues and increased costs for Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) with drinking water, drainage and wastewater, and solid waste. Significant federal grant funds are needed to support SPU and utilities across the nation with ongoing work to continue to protect public health and the environment.
- **Increase Funding and Access to Low Income Energy Assistance Program:** Seattle City Light has seen a great uptick in applications for the program, with over 85% of new applicants referencing that their income or work was impacted by COVID-19.

Protect Vulnerable Residents

Stay at home orders help prevent the spread of coronavirus and keep more people healthy from infectious disease, but home is not a safe place for everyone. The Seattle Police Department is reporting a 22% increase in domestic violence calls during this public health emergency. Additional federal funding is needed for sexual assault and domestic violence services as they adapt their service models to keep staff and clients safe, and respond to the increased need. Washington state has the structure in place to distribute these funds rapidly, but needs additional funding to provide expanded services. We need an additional \$100 million investment in the **Sexual Assault Services Program through the Violence Against Women Act.**

This crisis is impacting everyone in our community including our immigrant and refugee populations. In order to respond to everyone affected, we ask you to:

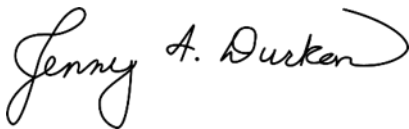
- Permit undocumented immigrants access to qualified health plan (QHP) coverage for COVID-19 care and reduce or eliminate QHP premiums/cost sharing for those under 200% of the federal poverty line.
- Create a special program for at least 18 months for current DACA recipients that participate in our nation's health care response to COVID-19. Later, Congress should compensate these

workers and their spouses and children by offering to make them immediately eligible for green cards when the emergency declaration has been lifted.

- Keep People from Falling Out of Status
 - Extend work permits for individuals with temporary relief
 - Extend USCIS filing deadlines; excuse late filings and grant automatic extensions of stays
 - CBP extends I-94 validity and implement a process to request satisfactory departure at all ports of entry

Thank you for your leadership during this nationwide pandemic. We appreciate your efforts to help our city maintain basic services and ensure our residents are supported during the public health and economic crisis.

Sincerely,



Jenny A. Durkan
Mayor of Seattle



M. Lorena González
Council President



Lisa Herbold
Councilmember



Alex Pedersen
Councilmember



Andrew Lewis
Councilmember



Tammy Morales
Councilmember



Debora Juarez
Councilmember



Teresa Mosqueda
Councilmember



Kshama Sawant
Councilmember



Dan Strauss
Councilmember