DATE: April 24, 2020

TO: Members of the Richmond City Council

FROM: Mayor Levar M. Stoney

CC: Lenora Reid, Acting City Administrative Officer

RE: COVID-19 Response and Recovery Initiatives Update

Last week I provided my fifth weekly COVID-19 response and recovery update to members of the Richmond City Council and public. This sixth memorandum will build upon what was described last week as part of my administration’s comprehensive response to combat COVID-19.

To date, Richmond has 267 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 14 tragic COVID-19-related deaths. Moreover, 61 percent of confirmed cases and 93 percent of deaths are African American. The visualization of the city’s COVID-19 data (below) is very unsettling and sheds light, once again, on the health disparities that exist among race groups.

1 https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e7a426cb2e1486cd43c9561/t/5e9a222045f08654446cdf18/1587159585848/COVID-19+MEMORANDUM+4.17.20.pdf
2 http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/
MEMORANDUM

We should all be deeply concerned about this and work together to ensure that our communities of color receive the information and resources that they need during and after this pandemic. That is why, working with the Richmond City Health District, we have started COVID-19 testing in our Black and Brown communities. This testing is meant to empower our communities by giving those who may otherwise not have access to a test the opportunity to know whether they may carry the virus. Furthermore, and very importantly, we have a strategy in place to connect those who test positive for COVID-19 with the appropriate resources and healthcare service providers to get them the care and support they need and deserve to recover.

Additionally, I continue to urge Richmond residents to stay home if they can. The recent message coming from the White House indicating that states should reopen is a misguided, premature farce. No loss of life is worth economic gain. I hope that you will join me in that message as we have a duty, as elected officials, to be honest with and protect our residents during this crisis.

Furthermore, last week I described how my administration and our community partners are providing assistance to our most vulnerable populations during this health crisis. Here are our updates on actions taken this week.

1. On April 21st, my administration announced a $5.8M local and federal aid package to address emergency housing needs during COVID-19 pandemic. In the Notice of Available Funds (NOFA), I included $1 million for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to provide relief for families experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity, which will require a budget amendment approved by city council. You can read the details of this announcement here;

2. On April 22nd, I sent a letter to Governor Northam requesting additional assistance for localities to address the needs of renters and those experiencing homelessness. Specifically, I asked that he consider several recommendations from the Richmond Eviction Taskforce. I am thankful for Governor Northam and his team as they have already reached out to collaborate on several of the items included in my letter. You can read the details of my letter here;

3. I declared April 20-24 Earth Week in Richmond, and on April 22nd, I hosted a Facebook Live event with Kendra Norrell of Richmond’s Sustainability Office. We discussed how the very same populations most impacted by COVID-19 are also most impacted by climate change. These maps (attached), created by the Sustainability Office, demonstrate these inequities. Thankfully, we have an equity-conscious climate action planning process, which you can engage now by visiting RVAgreen2050.com and signing up to be a virtual ambassador;

4. On April 23rd, Dr. Danny Avula, Superintendent Jason Kamras, and I held a press conference to update the public on the status of COVID-19 in the City of Richmond and recent response efforts. Specifically, we highlighted the importance of informing residents about accurate COVID-19 testing information. I hope that you will join me in
ensuring Richmond residents, especially our communities of color, receive timely and accurate information about COVID-19;

Additionally, Superintendent Kamras shared that RPS has delivered a quarter of a million meals to RPS students and families and continues to distribute laptops to RPS students in need. You can listen to our full press conference here;

5. Starting next week, there are several testing events in the city:
   a. Monday, April 27: Hillside Community
   b. Tuesday, April 28: Creighton Community
   c. Thursday, April 30: Gilpin Resource Center
You must call the COVID-19 Hotline (804-205-3501) to register. No payment required!

6. As of April 24th, 30 restaurants have applied and 25 have been approved to participate in the city’s first responder meals program, which supports both Richmond’s local restaurant industry and diligent first responders. This program will officially begin next week. You can read more about this program here and find the application here;

7. As of April 24th, the Richmond Small Business Disaster Loan Program, which offers interest-free emergency loans of up to $20,000 to small businesses within city limits, has had 62 applicants. Of those 62, only 34 have submitted completed applications. Additionally, 17 total loans have been approved, valuing $310,877;

8. As of April 24th, 100 families have received Family Crisis Funds. An estimated additional 200 families will receive aid by May 1st;

9. Starting last Friday, the City of Richmond received additional PPE supplies, including N95 and surgical masks, Tyvek suits, and gowns. We made the following deliveries to various city departments:
   a. Police – 190 boxes of gloves
   b. Courts – 15 boxes of gloves, 50 surgical masks
   c. Registrar – 21 boxes of gloves
   d. PDR – 80 boxes of gloves
   e. DSS – 90 boxes of gloves
   f. DPU – 2718 boxes of gloves, 1000 surgical masks, 560 N95 masks
   g. Sheriff – 10 boxes of gloves
   h. OCWB – 25 N95 masks

10. This week, we continued to add additional resources for Richmonders to the RVAStrong website. Specifically:
   a. We have built a page for residents who need help with mental health challenges or addiction, with messages from our health district, links to local virtual support groups, and resources for families to talk to their kids about this uncertain time.
b. We also recognize that physical health needs may continue to be a source of stress, even if they’re not COVID-19 related. On the physical health page you can sign up for Medicaid application guidance, see if you qualify for healthcare through the Daily Planet, or connect with a community health worker.

c. Equitable public information strategy requires equal access – so we are building out RVAStrong in Spanish. Right now, Spanish-speaking Richmonders can access the same small-business support programs, reliable public health guidance, and up-to-date city information, all in Spanish.

d. We launched our print materials page, where we’ve summarized the resources available on RVAStrong into one hotline call sheet. Visit this page to learn how to safely share this resource with neighbors without internet access.

11. During Richmond City Council’s budget work session on April 13th, Budget Director Jay Brown provided council with updated revenue projections for FY2021. These projections were based on the most up-to-date information available to budget staff at that point in time.

There are still many unknowns that may change the projections as we move through the coming months. This same concern was also voiced by the Commonwealth of Virginia. As more information becomes available, the city intends to update its budget outlook and make adjustments accordingly. This is the same approach being taken by the surrounding localities as well as the Commonwealth.

Additionally, during this April 13th meeting, we agreed to create a Budget Review Committee, that will include both administration and council staff, to review the adopted FY2021 budget monthly, to include revenue collections, expenditures, federal/state/local economic data, the state of the pandemic locally, among other data elements in order to provide updated revenue estimates and recommend corresponding budget amendments based on such reviews;

12. Members of my administration continue to work with the Commonwealth of Virginia and community partners on an education and outreach program specifically for our underserved, vulnerable populations that were not eligible for assistance through the CARES Act;

13. YMCA of Greater Richmond continues to register new participants in Camp Hope, their emergency childcare program for essential employees of all sectors;

14. Updates to available city services can be found here; and,

15. My administration continues to support efforts taken by Governor Northam, such as his mandated stay-at-home order, to help flatten the curve. We are committed to enforcing his executive order in the City of Richmond. To report non-compliance, please call the
RPD non-emergency number: 804-646-5100. Additional information on local enforcement can be found here.

We are in uncharted territory and are taking these measures out of an abundance of caution. My administration remains committed to working with the Richmond City Council and providing timely updates during these ever-changing times. This is an opportunity for us to come together and do what we were elected to do: serve our constituents when they need us most.