DATE: May 1, 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 sixth weekly COVID-19 response and recovery update to members of the Richmond City Council and public.¹ This 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 364 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 15 tragic COVID-19-related deaths.² Moreover, 56 percent of confirmed cases and 93 percent of Richmonders who have died from COVID-19 have been Black. 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/5ea6ee289aac8c314b2f6bc4/1587998252474/COVID-19+MEMORANDUM+4.24.20%5B2%5D.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.

This week, we tested 248 people total for COVID-19 at the Hillside, Creighton, and Gilpin sites. Next week, the Richmond City Health District scheduled another testing site at Nottingham Green in Henrico County, which is open to anyone who would like to be tested. Remember to call 804-205-3501 to register. Additional testing sites will be announced soon.

I also need your help encouraging Richmonders to stay home. A recent analysis conducted by the University of Maryland shows that only 32 percent of Richmonders are staying home and that 50 percent of trips are out of the city. I know that many people are getting restless, but in order to flatten the curve and keep our essential workers safe, we all have to do our part by staying home. I hope that you will share that message in your districts.

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 27th, I introduced a resolution during the Richmond City Council meeting asking for additional federal aid from the United States Congress to recover from the damaging economic loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and to promote timely recovery assistance for all residents. I welcome any and all co-patrons of this resolution;

2. On April 27th, the Richmond City Council adopted the tax amnesty ordinance that I introduced last month. I am thankful for all nine members of council who co-patroned this effort.

Building on this initial effort and working with Council President Newbille and Councilwoman Larson, we have shared a second paper with council staff that would provide amnesty on fines and interest for personal property and real estate tax. I welcome any and all co-patrons on this paper as well;

3. The city’s first responder meals program, which supports both Richmond’s local restaurant industry and diligent first responders, launched on April 27th. To date, 39 restaurants have applied to participate in the program and 29 have been approved. You can read more about this program here and find the application here;
4. On April 30th, Dr. Danny Avula 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. I was heartbroken to share that the City of Richmond lost an employee to COVID-19 this week. To date, 11 city employees have contracted COVID-19. You can watch the full press conference here;

5. On April 30th, we announced that the City of Richmond would remain closed to the public through May 17th. You can read more about this closure here;

6. As of May 1st, 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 applicants, 21 have been approved, valuing $411,200;

7. As of May 1st, 200 families have received Family Crisis Funds. Additionally, the Office of Community Wealth Building Ambassadors placed COVID-19 resource information on doors in the following communities: Whitcomb, Fairfield, Mosby, Hillside, Gilpin, Creighton, Afton, Bainbridge, Fulton, Randolph Apartments, and Oscar E. Stovall Place. Information was placed on over 3,300 doors of RRHA community members;

8. The city’s PPE supply chain has improved greatly, especially from local vendors. The city also continues to receive donations from the community for which we are grateful. Additionally, the city is partnering with the state in an upcoming initiative to provide health education, PPE, and hand sanitizer to our most vulnerable communities. More to come on this initiative soon;

9. This week, we continued to add additional resources for Richmonders to the RVAStrong website. Specifically:
   a. Equitable public information strategy requires equal access. That’s why we’ve built out RVAStrong in Spanish. It’s not identical to the English version because not all providers have the ability to meet the language needs of the Hispanic community. Rather, my office has worked with the Office of Multicultural Affairs to ensure we’re leading Hispanic Richmonders to service providers that can help them and opportunities that apply to them. Visit RVAStrong.org/espanol to learn more, and please share the resource hub with your network.
   b. 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;

10. 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;
11. YMCA of Greater Richmond continues to register new participants in Camp Hope, their emergency childcare program for essential employees of all sectors;

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

13. 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.