MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 8, 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 seventh 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 494 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 18 tragic COVID-19-related deaths.² Moreover, 49 percent of confirmed cases and 89 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.

16 out of 18 Richmonders who have died are Black

¹ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e7a426cb2e1486cd43c9561/t/5eac99b96d0ba86b972f7057/1588369850654/COVID-19+MEMORANDUM+5.1.20.pdf
² http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/
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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.

Next week the following sites are open for testing:

- Monday, May 11 at the Community Supermarket in the East End
- Tuesday, May 12 at the Southwood Apartment complex in Southside
- Thursday, May 14 at the Eastern Henrico Recreation Center

All sites are open to anyone who would like to be tested. Remember to call 804-205-3501 to register.

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 May 4th, the Richmond City Council unanimously approved my federal aid resolution, which asks for direct aid to cities 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 appreciate the support of the Richmond City Council on this effort;

2. On May 4th, working with Council President Newbille and Councilwoman Larson, I introduced a second ordinance 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;

3. On May 7th, 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. During this conference, I emphasized that the data has to dictate any reopening of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the City of Richmond. We have a duty as elected officials to ensure the health and safety of our residents, which is why my administration is continuing to monitor the announcements made by Governor Northam related to reopening. As I have said before, any reopening must be slow and steady. You can watch the full press conference here;

As a reminder, the City of Richmond will remain closed to the public through May 17th. You can read more about this closure here;
4. On May 7th, I declared the City of Richmond a Compassionate City as part of the Charter for Compassion. You can read the entire proclamation here. You can learn more about this effort and our community partners here and here;

5. As of May 8th, the city’s first responder meals program has had 53 restaurants apply, of which 42 have been approved. You can read more about this program here and find the application here;

6. As of May 8th, the Richmond Small Business Disaster Loan Program has had 64 applicants. Of those 64 applicants, 21 have been approved, valuing $411,200. An additional five loans are being finalized for a value of $83,720;

7. As of May 8th, the Office of Community Wealth Building (OCWB) has referred 448 families to Enrichmond to receive Family Crisis Funds. The OCWB Ambassadors also distributed 12,800 COVID-19 informational flyers in the Fulton and East End communities;

8. On May 11th, I will introduce a resolution requesting the approval of City Council of a collaborative and transparent process for reviewing the FY2021 adopted budget. This paper will also outline a process for providing amendments due to a projected revenue surplus or shortfall.

   Additionally, the third quarter FY2020 budget report will be introduced during the Richmond City Council meeting on May 11th.

9. At the start of this pandemic, I formed a working group to monitor the state of Richmond’s food system during and in the wake of COVID-19. This group includes subject-matter experts on the food bank system, state and federal food policy, and the restaurant community. The status of the food system is secure, so the main purpose of this group is to cover any emerging gaps and bolster the structure and reach of an already robust apparatus.

   Doug Pick of Feed More provided an update on the status of the food bank system during my May 8th press conference, emphasizing that the system is in good shape.

   Additionally, the federal government recently announced that Virginia has qualified for the Pandemic EBT program. This program is meant to provide nutrition support to families throughout the city. ALL students who qualify for free and reduced lunch benefit from the Pandemic EBT program, and every family will receive roughly $370 per child through EBT. Please share this important information within your districts;

10. 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;
11. 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;

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.