Dear Senator Warner and Senator Kaine:

I am writing to follow-up on my letter dated April 16, 2020, regarding requests for additional federal assistance to combat COVID-19. As you are aware, this pandemic is uncharted territory and has forced localities to make challenging decisions in order to best protect our residents. Most recently, I formally requested a delay in entering Phase One of Governor Northam’s reopening plan for the Commonwealth of Virginia based on an increase in our local case percent positivity ratio. Governor Northam approved that request on May 14.

I want nothing more than for the City of Richmond to reopen – to feel full of life again with residents enjoying their favorite restaurants and visitors exploring what our great city has to offer. Unfortunately, as COVID-19 is a highly contagious virus with sometimes deadly consequences, we must take every precaution to protect the lives of Richmonders.

Furthermore, even though the local data in Richmond does not justify entering Phase One, I know that many small business owners are concerned about further delays in reopening. I hear their concerns and appreciate their patience as we work to ensure the health and safety of Richmond residents. Small businesses are the backbone of Richmond and they deserve to be supported so that they can flourish and be part of Richmond’s future. As such, I urge your continued support in assisting our small businesses.

Specifically, I request the following:

1. Support small businesses by modifying the Small Business Administration’s (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP):
   a. Change the origination date of a PPP loan to the first day that small businesses, in any given entity, can legally and fully reopen; and,
b. Extend the maximum loan amounts to three months after they are allowed to reopen and operate at full capacity.

Under current guidelines, the PPP does not provide the flexibility businesses need during a pandemic. Given that the virus dictates the timeline for being able to safely reopen, the SBA’s arbitrary deadline is unrealistic and inappropriately puts pressure on businesses to open, whether they, and their employees, are prepared to or not. The SBA must do better to support our businesses.

2. Create a Restaurant Stabilization Fund
   a. Even though the PPP will help restaurants rehire employees if the timing issue above can be resolved, more is required to ensure businesses are sustainable in the long-term. If restaurants do not have the funds to pay vendors and other reopening costs, this will prove an insurmountable barrier to successfully reopening. According to the Independent Restaurant Coalition, “with a $50-$100 billion reinvestment, independent restaurants would be able to navigate local and state closure mandates, hire back our employees, and survive for the future as patrons return to dining out in restaurants again.”

3. Support Senator Cory Booker’s Small Business Local Relief Act:
   a. This proposal would build on existing efforts by sending $50 billion in direct assistance to localities and states to establish and grow local funds. This will provide small businesses, especially those that are minority-owned, with additional support to survive this economic crisis.
   b. This proposal will also enable our communities to advance strategies that are more aligned with the reopening of the economy, particularly around the revival of Main Streets and other key business districts.
   c. Lastly, a letter signed by 100 mayors across the U.S. supporting this effort was shared with Congressional leadership on May 15.
On behalf of the City of Richmond, I am pleased to provide support as you consider these options for small businesses. Again, I greatly appreciate your leadership during this challenging and unprecedented time.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Levar M. Stoney
Mayor