DATE: May 29, 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 tenth weekly COVID-19 response and recovery update to members of the Richmond City Council and public. 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 1,202 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 22 tragic COVID-19-related deaths. Moreover, 31 percent of confirmed cases and 77 percent of Richmonders who have died from COVID-19 have been Black. Where we know the ethnicity of our cases, Hispanic and Latinx Richmonders make up an outsized proportion, representing approximately 30 percent of cases while only accounting for 6-7 percent of our total population.

On May 27th, I announced that the City of Richmond will cautiously move into Phase 1 of Forward Virginia, the state’s reopening plan. The city initially requested a modified Phase 1 reopening that maintained restrictions on places of worship and personal care and grooming services, as mass gatherings and close personal contact for extended periods of time both significantly increase chance of community spread.

Because the governor denied the city’s modified plan for reopening, Richmond will move into Phase 1 of Forward Virginia, the state’s reopening plan, with strong recommendations reflecting my proposed modifications. Local guidance and helpful links to state guidance are available here. The state has yet to provide guidance on what Phases 2 and 3 will include.

As part of Phase 1, city facilities will slowly begin to reopen. The City of Richmond workforce has been operative throughout the State of Emergency, providing essential services to residents and businesses despite the public health crisis. Phase 1 largely entails the phasing in of limited in-person services in key city facilities, mostly through appointments. You can read the details of city facilities reopening here.

1 https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e7a426cb2e1486cd43c9561/t/5ed16b06df699b54f87d2fa9/1590782730695/COVID-19+MEMORANDUM+5.22.20.pdf
2 http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/
MEMORANDUM

I have detailed a number of best practices for residents and business owners to ensure that the city moves into Phase 1 cautiously. The best practices emerged from conversations between my administration and members of the business community, faith leadership, and health professionals.

1. All residents who are medically able to should wear a face-covering that covers the mouth and nose when in public spaces. The wearing of a face covering does not negate the need for 6-foot social distancing.
2. Faith communities should continue to meet virtually if possible. If in-person meetings are absolutely necessary, the city strongly recommends faith groups meet outside while practicing strict social distancing and enforcing the face-covering requirement.
3. Food and drink establishments that choose to offer outdoor service at half capacity are asked to request a name and contact information of patrons who dine in for contact tracing purposes. This practice is voluntary for both patrons and restaurants. However, collecting this small amount of information for each dine-in party will go far in assisting the Richmond City Health District in tracing and containing outbreaks. Guidance on this practice is available here.

I also made two requests of the state: (1) to continue to assist the city in further expanding testing capacity, and (2) providing adequate face-coverings and hand sanitizer throughout the capital city. You can watch the full press conference outlining these efforts here.

In addition to the best practices outlined above, the city is also implementing the “box it in” approach to combating COVID-19, which includes programs to test, trace, and isolate. Specifically, we have expanded our testing capacity, built out our contact tracing apparatus, and are ensuring that everyone who is COVID-19 positive can isolate safely. We have also partnered with the state to distribute protective supplies in the neighborhoods that need them most. Lastly, we have successfully advocated for a statewide face covering requirement, which Governor Northam announced Tuesday afternoon. Data shows that this simple step alone can significantly reduce the transmission of this deadly disease.

In addition to this week’s new efforts, below are several updates on established response programs:

1. To find out what Phase 1 of reopening looks like for small businesses in the City of Richmond, visit RVAStrong.org. We have included information on best practices, the application and guidelines for a temporary outdoor dining encroachment permit, and how to register for a ForwardRVA toolkit.

2. On May 27th, I hosted our first Color of Covid conversation, partnering with the Richmond City Health District. Delegate Delores McQuinn, Delegate Lamont Bagby, Dr. Robert Winn (Director, VCU Massey Cancer Center, Dr. Patricia Cook (Chief Medical Officer, Daily Planet Health Services), and Dr. Danny Avula joined me in this
conversation to discuss the disparate impact COVID-19 has had on communities of color. You can listen to this week’s Color of Covid panel [here](#).

3. As of May 29th, 502 residents have been referred to Enrichmond to receive Family Crisis Funds. Enrichmond has provided Family Crisis Funds to 388 residents. The Office of Community Wealth Building has provided 76 individuals with reloadable gift cards.

4. As of May 29th, the city’s first responder meals program has had 60 restaurants apply – six restaurants are not eligible to participate in the program and seven have voluntarily stopped participating. From April 27 to May 23, 2020, 9,938 meals have been purchased from local restaurants for Public Safety First Responders. You can read more about this program [here](#) and find the application [here](#).

5. As of May 29th, the Richmond Small Business Disaster Loan Program has had 68 applicants. Of those 68 applicants, 43 have been approved, valuing $834,920. Three applicants withdrew their applications and seven loans have been denied. The following outlines a summary of business type for the approved applicants:

- 4 – Brewery / Distillery
- 2 – Commercial Cleaning / Janitorial Services
- 1 – Construction
- 3 – Event Services
- 1 – Food Manufacturing
- 4 – Healthcare / Fitness
- 1 – Industrial Services
- 3 – Other
- 4 – Professional Services
- 6 – Restaurants
- 2 – Restaurant Equipment
- 4 – Retail Sales
- 3 – Retail Services
- 5 – Tourism

6. The following community COVID-19 test sites are currently scheduled:
   a. Saturday, May 30 at Martin Luther King Middle School from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
   b. Monday, June 1 at Saint Paul’s Baptist Church from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
   c. Tuesday, June 2 at Diversity Richmond Event Hall from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
   d. Thursday, June 4 at Tuckahoe Middle School from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

   *Remember to call 804-205-3501 to register.*
Additionally, Richmonders can view their testing options on RVAStrong. On this page, you can view the weekly schedule of free community testing events and see how to get tested if you do not qualify for a community event.

When public health is on the line, blindly pushing forward is not an option. Decisions must be thoughtful, and they must be based in our collective knowledge of and love for our city. 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.