DATE:       June 26, 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 fourteenth 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 as part of my administration’s comprehensive response to combat COVID-19.

To date, Richmond has 2,133 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 30 tragic COVID-19-related deaths.² Moreover, approximately 25 percent of confirmed cases and 73 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 38 percent of cases while only accounting for 6-7 percent of our total population.

On July 1st, the City of Richmond will move into Phase Three of the state’s reopening plan, Forward Virginia. Under Phase Three of Forward Virginia, eating and drinking establishment can open at full capacity as long as the mandatory six feet of social distancing is maintained between parties at all times. Bar areas can be opened, but six feet of distance between customers is mandatory. Gyms must be limited to no more than 75% of the lowest occupancy load on the certificate of occupancy, and social gatherings should be limited to 50% occupancy of the event space, if applicable, or 250 participants. Additionally, entertainment and amusement venues may open at half capacity, which is not to exceed 1,000 people. Complete guidance on Phase Three can be found here. The city’s press release on our decision to move into Phase Three can be found here.

The following is a list of guidelines all Richmonders should follow during Phase Three, provided by the Richmond City Health District:

- Continue to wear face masks.
- Keep six feet of distance from anyone outside your household.
- Continue to wash or sanitize your hands frequently, but especially after leaving a public place or before adjusting or removing your mask.

¹ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e7a426cb2e1486cd43c9561/t/5ef63b7410856f3deae313bb/1593195382230/COVID-19+MEMORANDUM+6.19.20.pdf
² http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/
If you experience symptoms of COVID-19, stay home and call your primary care provider to discuss testing opportunities, or call the Richmond and Henrico COVID-19 hotline at 804-205-3501 to register for a free testing event. Testing opportunities for City of Richmond residents are listed at RVAStrong.org/testing.

As the city moves forward with reopening, we will continue our “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. If an epidemiologist recommends an individual for voluntary supported isolation, that individual will get one-on-one guidance from a health district social worker or community health worker to get a hotel room and keep their families safe for the entire isolation period. We have also partnered with the state to distribute protective supplies in the neighborhoods that need them most. Lastly, we are working with our Safety Net providers to ensure that our under- and uninsured residents who test positive for Covid-19 are connected with a primary care provider.

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

1. To find out what Phase Three of reopening looks like for small businesses in the City of Richmond, visit http://www.rvastrong.org/reopeningguidance. We have included information on best practices, the application and guidelines for a temporary outdoor dining encroachment permit, signage options to promote mask-wearing and how to register for a ForwardRVA toolkit.

2. The City of Richmond now offers three ways restaurant owners can creatively use space around their establishment.
   a. If a restaurant wants to offer outdoor dining on private property, such as a parking lot owned by the establishment, they can contact City of Richmond Zoning Administrator Chuck Davidson (chuck.davidson@richmondgov.com).
   b. If a restaurant owner wants to offer outdoor dining by expanding onto a public sidewalk, they should fill out an encroachment permit application.
   c. If a restaurant owner wants support in designing and implementing a parklet, or the transformation of a parking space in the public right of way into public space for recreation and relaxation, they should inquire about the new Picnic in a Parklet program, made possible by a partnership between the city and Venture Richmond.

   All of these opportunities are detailed at www.RVAStrong.org/outdoordining

3. On June 22nd, the city announced that $6 million in CARES Act funding would go towards eviction diversion and rental assistance. The allocation represents 30 percent of the city’s CARES Act funding from the state. The funding will support both households currently facing evictions pending in the courts as well as those at risk of eviction due to
economic challenges arising from COVID-19. You can read more about this announcement here.

4. As of June 26th, the Office of Community Wealth Building (OCWB) has referred 635 families to EnRichmond to receive Robins Foundation Family Crisis Funds. Enrichmond has provided Family Crisis Funds to 621 individuals/families. OCWB has distributed 775 $500 reloadable gift cards to city residents through this initiative.

5. The Richmond City Health District, alongside the City of Richmond, continues to provide testing opportunities, primary care support, mask distribution and supported isolations for those that need it. For information on testing availability in the Richmond area, visit RVAStrong.org/testing, use the Virginia Department of Health’s zip code testing locator, or call the Richmond City and Henrico County COVID-19 Hotline at 804-205-3501.

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.