



MEMORADUM

R-48

Date: December 8, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilwoman Stacy Mungo Flanigan, Fifth District
Councilwoman Suzie Price, Third District
Councilmember Al Austin, Eighth District

Subject: Recommendation to Update COVID-19 Data Dashboard to Reflect Decision Making Data Sets and Lobby for Relief for Neighbors

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendation to direct the City Manager and all appropriate departments to update the City of Long Beach COVID-19 Data Dashboard (available at www.longbeach.gov/covid19data) to clearly reflect any data sets considered or utilized by our Health Officer in determining Health Orders to ensure transparency and clarity in the decision making process.

Recommendation to direct the City Manager and appropriate staff to report back on our City's efforts to lobby our federal and state legislature for a robust community focused relief bill that would provide support to our neighbors who are out of work, the non-profits that have supported them, the small businesses that have been completely or partially shut down, and the cities and states that have provided the infrastructure for testing, response and resiliency.

In addition, research and bring back to Council options to advocate for federal legislative action support deferment and forbearance of government backed, Small Business Association (SBA) loans in light of the fiscal impact to small businesses.

DISCUSSION

The COVID 19 pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on Long Beach communities. A recent press release included information that is not accessible to the public on our COVID dashboard. The press release stated "COVID-19 hospitalizations for hospitals that serve Long Beach-area residents have increased 248% from 25 on Nov. 1 to 85 on Nov. 22." Now an email from the City Manager states that Long Beach area hospitals had 29 COVID patients on Nov 1. We realize that initial numbers may change once confirmations are provided. Our data dashboard (linked above) includes initially reported numbers and confirmed numbers. These numbers had not previously been sited and this benchmark had not previously been discussed as a threshold for additional concern. Additionally, the Health Director estimated that there were 1,600 available hospital beds, but when a community member visits each hospital's website there are

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variances that could be explained if we had greater transparency. As a City with our own Health Department, we must keep the public trust while making further recommendations and guidelines for health and safety, and we can only do that if the public doesn't feel like the benchmark is being moved or recreated every time a change is made.

As leaders in a large City we feel it important to provide information that can help county, state, and federal agencies best support our constituent's needs. We have met with neighbors who have lost their jobs, the managers and businesses they worked for, the landlords who have been without rent for months and the unions and associations many of these people are a part of. Support from the federal government is critical in our ability to provide relief from the suffering caused medically, emotionally, and financial by COVID-19. In cities where restrictions keep businesses completely or partially closed, we must provide the support needed to weather these shutdowns, survive and help us build back stronger. We must provide support to the non-profits who have leveraged themselves to fill the gap and local governments who are providing the infrastructure for testing, clinics and hospitals that adjusted to support response efforts. Employees need to be paid in order to maintain their health care and housing. We need to ensure cities like Long Beach who are economic drivers are able to bounce back and support the national recovery.

Small business owners don't want to lose their employees. They want to reopen and get back to work when it is safe but many of them are unable to pay the rent, insurance, City license fees, utilities and other bills that are accruing during the pandemic closures and partial openings. To prepare for the recovery the City should aggressively pursue and lobby for changes to the SBA loan program. These changes should include options such as loan deferment, interest rate reduction, forbearance of all or a pro-rated portion of the loans to correspond with business closures and/or partial openings. The current relief program made available to small businesses are supportive of small business during normal business operations, but they have requirements that pose major stressors on small business owners who are faced with new economic realities in light of COVID-19. The new programs for relief to business owners must contain some long-term relief for government backed small business loans.

FISCAL IMPACT

Due to the urgency of this item, no fiscal analysis was conducted.

STATEMENT OF URGENCY

Approval of this recommendation is urgent due to the regularly changing Health Orders and the economic crisis caused by COVID-19.