



Legislation Text

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CITY OF SEATTLE

RESOLUTION _____

A RESOLUTION identifying the City Council's priorities to maximize local use of future federal funding to support COVID-19 relief and recovery efforts.

WHEREAS, on February 29, 2020, the Washington Governor issued Proclamation 20-05, proclaiming a state of emergency for all counties throughout the state of Washington in response to new cases of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19); and

WHEREAS, on March 3, 2020, Mayor Jenny A. Durkan proclaimed a civil emergency in Seattle; and

WHEREAS, on March 5, 2020, the City Council adopted Resolution 31937 affirming the civil emergency, modifying orders transmitted by the Mayor related to the emergency, and establishing Council's expectations related to future orders and reporting by the Mayor during the civil emergency; and

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced that COVID-19 is officially a global pandemic; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared a national state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, as of March 11, 2021, the State of Washington has confirmed 327,000 COVID-19 infections and 5,100 residents of Washington have died of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the immediate economic impacts from the COVID-19 emergency have been drastic and are expected to last much longer than the civil emergency itself; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 crisis has had a significant impact on the local economy, impacting the retail, restaurant, construction, gig economy, and other industries, resulting in loss of income for many

businesses; and

WHEREAS, performing arts and live music venues closed due to State prohibitions against large gatherings on March 11, 2020, and most, if not all, remain closed to this day despite the recent loosening of restrictions, and small, locally owned live music venues are an essential component of Seattle's music ecosystem, serving as the primary employer of local musicians and performing artists; and

WHEREAS, at the end of August 2020, over 3,000 businesses in the Seattle metropolitan area were closed, with an estimated 59 percent of those closures being permanent, and over 32,700 people in Seattle were unemployed; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a grave economic crisis. People in our community have been laid off or have had their work hours reduced, and many people are struggling to feed and house their families. Social services are strained, given the increased demand for resources. Businesses are struggling to pay their employees and cover operating costs; and

WHEREAS, at the national level, mothers of children aged 12 years and younger lost jobs at a rate three times greater than fathers of young children between February and August 2020, and in December 2020, all 156,000 net job losses in the U.S. were held by women. Throughout the pandemic, women, particularly women of color, have experienced higher levels of unemployment, threatening to undo decades of progress towards gender equity; and

WHEREAS, the affordable housing crisis, homelessness emergency, and the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic and unemployment emergencies are deeply impacting the lives of people throughout Seattle and the region and disproportionately harming Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color, immigrants, the LGBTQIA community, disabled community members, and women, who already struggle against entrenched inequality; and

WHEREAS, based on the January 20 to February 1, 2021 data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey, it is estimated that approximately 31,000 Seattle renter households were behind in paying rent

over the last month; and

WHEREAS, individual investor landlords, commonly known as “mom and pop” landlords, own 77 percent of small rental properties (buildings with two to four units) nationally. Tenants of small buildings have lower median household incomes as compared to tenants of other types of buildings and 44 percent of these tenants are Black or Hispanic. These landlords depend on rental income, may themselves be suffering other pandemic-related economic hardships, and are increasingly at risk of defaulting on their properties and destabilizing their tenants; and

WHEREAS, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many services, workplaces, and schools were forced to shift online, with stark consequences for Black, Latinx, and low-income households, who have disproportionately less access to the internet at home. Having internet service at home is essential so that people can work remotely, engage their children in distance learning, connect with health care services, and access government services, including financial assistance and other resources; and

WHEREAS, the number of people in shelters, encampments, and hotels has grown due to investments in these interventions during the pandemic, but there is a need to provide permanent affordable housing into which these individuals can move in order to address the homelessness problem; and

WHEREAS, the current multifamily housing rental market may provide opportunities to purchase existing buildings that would immediately increase the stock of permanently affordable housing in a cost efficient manner; and

WHEREAS, on March 10, 2021, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which will provide \$1.9 trillion in pandemic relief; and

WHEREAS, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 will provide Seattle an estimated \$239 million in direct funding, of which about 50 percent is anticipated in 2021, for pandemic relief that can be used for a broad range of uses, including restoring government services cut or reduced in response to pandemic-related revenue losses; and

WHEREAS, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 will provide \$46 billion for testing and contract tracing capacity and \$14 billion for vaccine distribution support, portions of which are likely to be provided to the Washington Department of Health and Public Health - Seattle and King County and subsequently provided to the City; and

WHEREAS, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 includes \$25 billion in restaurant relief grants that will initially be available to women- and minority-owned businesses; and

WHEREAS, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 includes \$19 billion for emergency rental assistance and \$5 billion for homelessness services; and

WHEREAS, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 includes \$10 billion for a Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund; and

WHEREAS, according to a presentation by the City Budget Office Director to the Finance and Housing Committee on February 19, 2021, the City has \$17.2 million of Coronavirus Relief Funds that were previously held in reserve but are available for expenditure until December 31, 2021; and

WHEREAS, the \$900 billion Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 that became law in December 2020 provides \$23 million directly to Seattle to provide rental assistance; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has the authority to appropriate funds and set spending priorities; and

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle should utilize federal resources to support programs and services that provide critical and immediate relief to people and small businesses in Seattle, and support strategies that will support a more resilient, prosperous, and equitable recovery; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE THAT:

Section 1. The City of Seattle (“City”) shall prioritize use of anticipated federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to maintain programs and services that support the City’s public health response, provide critical resources to those disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, immigrant and refugee communities, small and micro-businesses, low-income households, people experiencing homelessness or

housing insecurity, and workforce development. Future spending should focus on addressing the ongoing health needs and both the short- and long-term economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, building on and expanding the types of investments funded in the Jump Start COVID Relief Plan in 2020 and 2021. The following principles shall guide decisions by the Council when appropriating funds the City will receive from the federal government to support COVID-19 relief and recovery efforts:

A. Equity. There is a disproportionate rate of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths within Latinx, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) communities. The severe impact of the disease on these communities is directly related to the dangerous combination of chronic health conditions caused by a historic lack of access to health care and lack of access to critical social services fueled by systemic racism that results in severe economic inequality. Further, these same populations are overrepresented among the frontline workforce, and thus are disproportionately more likely to be exposed to COVID-19. The City has an essential duty to use its resources and leadership to address these disparities and provide all residents with equitable services. City investments should prioritize Seattle's most impacted populations by using a racial equity lens when making funding decisions.

B. Coordination. The City should coordinate its efforts with county, regional, state, community, and institutional partners, and leverage shared resources to ensure that the City's response is addressing gaps in service provision. The City shall continue to expand its financial partnership with King County to support County programs and services that primarily benefit households, workers, nonprofit organizations, and small businesses in Seattle. Further, the City should maximize all available strategies to finance the response (including grants and reimbursable expenditures) to scale the City's response commensurate to the magnitude of the impacts of the pandemic.

C. Flexibility. The City should be flexible and responsive in its approach as it learns and actively prioritizes resources as needed to maximize impact.

D. Resilience. Federal funding should be appropriated so that the City can continue to deliver critical

services to communities most impacted by COVID-19 and is well-prepared to weather future economic uncertainty as the economy recovers. These funds should be used so that the City is positioned to implement the Jump Start spending plan for 2022, established in Ordinance 126109 and Resolution 31957, that calls for investments in new housing, the Equitable Development Initiative, Economic Revitalization, and the Green New Deal for Seattle. Maximum levels of payroll expense tax revenues should be dedicated to those uses intended to inject critical stimulus in Seattle's economy to support a more resilient, prosperous, and equitable city, rather than relying substantially on payroll expense tax revenues to address the pandemic-related revenue losses that support base services.

Section 2. Based on these guiding principles, the Council shall prioritize uses that will advance an equitable economic recovery for Seattle. These priorities focus on expenditures, within federal funding limitations, will accelerate the city's recovery from the pandemic in the short-term, and create a more resilient, diversified, and just local economy in the long-term. Investments shall be made in the following categories:

A. Vaccines and testing. Vaccine delivery and COVID-19 testing through 2021, including pop-up clinics and mobile vaccination teams and other strategies called for in Resolution 31992 to ensure that vaccines are provided equitably and reach populations that may not easily access vaccines due to technology or mobility challenges, language or communication barriers, or medical distrust.

B. Food assistance

1. Extension of the Emergency Grocery Voucher program, or similar direct assistance, through 2021;
2. Expanded food support programs through 2021, including food banks, meal delivery, meals in shelters and permanent supportive housing, and other food assistance; and
3. Innovative new programs that partner with restaurants, local farms, and food entrepreneurs to provide meals.

C. Homelessness and housing services

1. Investments in rental assistance, eviction prevention, and foreclosure prevention programs. Rental assistance programs should minimize the application burden on tenants and allow landlords to apply directly for assistance, under the condition that they forgive any unpaid rent; and foreclosure prevention programs should target low- and middle-income “mom and pop” landlords to ensure stability for their tenants through 2021;

2. Financial assistance for tenants to cover internet service costs;

3. Non-congregate shelter services that achieve the goals outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by allowing people experiencing homelessness who are at increased risk of contracting or having severe outcomes from COVID-19 to achieve adequate social distancing;

4. Housing services that achieve the goals outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by allowing people experiencing homelessness who are at increased risk for contracting or having severe outcomes from COVID-19 to move into non-congregate accommodations that allow for adequate hygiene and social distancing;

5. Acquisition of buildings for emergency or permanent housing to allow social distancing for populations at increased risk for COVID-19; and

6. Hygiene services for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

D. Immigrant and refugee support

1. Assistance to Seattle’s low-income immigrant and refugee workers and households who have been economically impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and who are not eligible for many relief programs;

2. Advice to recipients on potential impacts that temporary financial assistance may have on other income-tested benefits and programs; and

3. Services that provide language access support for low-income people who need help accessing and understanding federal, state, and local assistance programs, testing, and vaccines.

E. Child care

1. Financial assistance to family child care providers and child care centers through 2021;
2. Resources to support the construction of new child care centers or to assist with capital improvements to existing child care centers;
3. Investments in mentoring and other programs designed to assist child care providers in obtaining licensing and navigating the process of establishing child care programs; and
4. Investments in training and coaching for child care workers to support their professional development and expand career opportunities.

F. Small businesses, worker assistance, and workforce recovery

1. Financial assistance for small and micro-businesses (including nonprofit organizations), artists, performing arts venues, and entrepreneurs, with a focus on the creative industries, restaurants, and bars; and technical and language support for small and micro-businesses and nonprofit organizations seeking to apply for federal, state, and other resources through 2021;
2. Financial assistance for workers in the hospitality and restaurant/bar industries impacted by job or wage losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic through 2021;
3. Hazard pay for essential workers funded through City contracts;
4. Financial and/or technical assistance for organizers of free outdoor community events that support small businesses, contribute to neighborhood identity, and encourage community cohesion;
5. Resources to assist small businesses with preparing permit applications and navigating City permitting processes;
6. Workforce development investments tailored towards supporting workers most impacted by the combination of: pandemic-related job losses in the retail, food, arts, entertainment, and hospitality sectors; and the disruptions to child care and the shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
7. Investments in employment, apprenticeship, and educational opportunities for young people,

prioritizing BIPOC youth.

G. Community wellbeing

1. Investments in essential household needs, such as diapers, for households impacted by the COVID-19 crisis;

2. Services and resources to reduce isolation and address mental health impacts of pandemic-related isolation for seniors;

3. Investments in alternatives to using law enforcement to respond to hate violence and resources to address underlying causes of hate violence, particularly as it relates to hate violence against populations that have been associated with the origins of the virus that causes COVID-19; and

4. Investments in gender-based violence response services, including mobile, housing, and culturally specific advocacy, bilingual advocacy services, housing and relocation assistance, advocacy for victim-defendants, emergency financial assistance, civil legal aid, peer support, and systems coordination.

H. Transportation

1. Investments in the public right-of-way and other public spaces to encourage walking, rolling, and biking;

2. Investments in transit services, particularly those that serve BIPOC communities;

3. Investments in critical transportation infrastructure, such as bridges; and

4. Restoration of funds that were cut from transportation infrastructure investments, including maintenance, in response to pandemic-related revenue losses.

I. Revenue replacement and financial resilience

1. Replacement of revenues that were lost due to the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, and strengthened financial resiliency by rebuilding the balances of the City's general-purpose fiscal reserves; and

2. Funding to ensure continuity of City services and stability of the City's workforce.

Adopted by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2021, and signed by
me in open session in authentication of its adoption this _____ day of _____, 2021.

President _____ of the City Council

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2021.

Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)