

CITY OF SEATTLE

RESOLUTION _____

..title

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

..body

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 February 22, 2021, the State of Washington has confirmed over 317,000 COVID-19 infections and more than 4,800 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

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

4 WHEREAS, at the end of August 2020, over 3,000 businesses in the Seattle metropolitan area
5 were closed, with an estimated 59 percent of those closures being permanent, and over
6 32,700 people in Seattle were unemployed; and

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

12 WHEREAS, at the national level, mothers of children aged 12 and younger lost jobs at a rate
13 three times greater than fathers of young children between February and August 2020,
14 and in December 2020, all 156,000 net job losses in the U.S. were held by women.

15 Throughout the pandemic, woman, particularly women of color, have experienced higher
16 levels of unemployment, threatening to undo decades of progress towards gender equity;
17 and

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

1 WHEREAS, based on the January 20 to February 1 data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s
2 Household Pulse Survey, it is estimated that approximately 31,000 Seattle renter
3 households were behind in paying rent over the last month; and

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

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

11 WHEREAS, the U.S. House of Representatives is expected to introduce and pass the American
12 Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which will provide \$1.9 trillion in pandemic relief; and

13 WHEREAS, the draft of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 currently under discussion
14 would provide Seattle \$221 million in direct funding for pandemic relief that can be used
15 for a broad range of uses, including revenue backfilling; and

16 WHEREAS, the draft of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 currently under discussion
17 would provide \$46 billion for testing and contract tracing capacity and \$14 billion for
18 vaccine distribution support, portions of which are likely to be provided to the
19 Washington Department of Health and Public Health – Seattle and King County and
20 subsequently provided to the City; and

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

1 WHEREAS, the draft of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 currently under discussion
2 includes \$19 billion for emergency rental assistance; and

3 WHEREAS, the draft of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 currently under discussion
4 includes \$5 billion for homelessness services; and

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

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

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

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

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

18 Section 1. The City of Seattle (“City”) shall prioritize use of anticipated federal funds
19 from the American Rescue Plan of 2021 to maintain programs and services that support the
20 City’s public health response, provide critical resources to those disproportionately impacted by
21 COVID-19, immigrant and refugee communities, small businesses, low-income households, and
22 people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity; and inject critical stimulus in Seattle’s
23 economy to support a more resilient, prosperous, and equitable city. Future spending should

1 focus on addressing the ongoing public health needs and both the short- and long-term economic
2 and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The following principles shall guide decisions
3 by the Council when appropriating funds the City will receive from the federal government to
4 support COVID-19 relief and recovery efforts:

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

15 B. Coordination. The City should coordinate its efforts with county, regional, state,
16 community, and institutional partners, and leverage shared resources to ensure that the City’s
17 response are addressing gaps in service provision. Further, the City should maximize all
18 available strategies to finance the response (including grants and reimbursable expenditures) to
19 scale the City’s response commensurate to the magnitude of the impacts of the pandemic.

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

22 D. Resilience. Ensure that the City: can continue to deliver critical services to
23 communities most impacted by COVID-19; is positioned to deliver new housing and Green New

1 Deal investments in 2022 and beyond, as provided in Resolution 31957 with maximum levels of
2 payroll expense tax revenues dedicated to those critical uses, rather than relying substantially on
3 payroll expense tax revenues to support existing services; and is well-prepared to weather future
4 economic uncertainty as the economy recovers.

5 Section 2. Based on these guiding principles, the Council shall prioritize uses that will
6 advance an equitable economic recovery for Seattle. These priorities identify expenditures,
7 assuming the federal funding has no limitations, both in the near-term to accelerate the city's
8 recovery from the pandemic, and in the long-term to create a more resilient, diversified, and just
9 local economy. Investments shall be made in the following categories:

10 A. Vaccines and testing

11 1. Vaccine delivery and COVID-19 testing through 2021, including pop-up clinics
12 and mobile vaccination teams and other strategies called for in Resolution 31992 to ensure that
13 vaccines are provided equitably;

14 B. Food assistance

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

20 C. Homelessness and housing services

21 1. Rental assistance and eviction prevention services through 2021;
22 2. Non-congregate shelter services to allow people experiencing homelessness
23 who are at increased risk of contracting COVID-19 to achieve adequate social distancing;

1 3. Housing services to allow people experiencing homelessness who are at
2 increased risk for contracting COVID-19, and that helps prevent the transmission of COVID-19,
3 to move into non-congregate accommodations that allow for adequate hygiene and social
4 distancing;

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

7 5. Hygiene services for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to prevent
8 the transmission of COVID-19;

9 D. Immigrant and refugee support

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

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

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

18 E. Child care

19 1. Financial assistance to family child care providers and child care centers
20 through 2021;

21 2. Investments in mentoring and other programs designed to assist child care
22 providers in obtaining licensing and navigating the process of establishing child care programs;
23 and

1 3. Investments in training and coaching for child care workers to support their
2 professional development and expand career opportunities;

3 F. Small business and workforce recovery

4 1. Financial assistance for small businesses and entrepreneurs, particularly the
5 creative industries and restaurants and bars, and technical and language support for small
6 businesses and nonprofit organizations seeking to apply for federal, state, and other resources
7 through 2021; and

8 2. Workforce development investments tailored towards supporting workers most
9 impacted by the combination of job losses in the retail, food, and hospitality sectors; and the
10 disruptions to child care and the shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic;

11 G. Revenue replacement and financial resilience

12 1. Replace revenues that were lost due to the economic downturn caused by the
13 pandemic and strengthen the City's financial resiliency by rebuilding the balances of the City's
14 general-purpose fiscal reserves; and

15 2. Funding to ensure continuity of City services and workforce.

