



We Are Columbia

Together we will build a world-class city

**Testimony of the Honorable Stephen K. Benjamin
Mayor of Columbia, South Carolina**

Member Briefing

Supporting America's Cities: What Mayors Need to Safely Reopen

**Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis
Committee on Oversight & Government Reform
United States House of Representatives**

May 29, 2020

Introduction

Chairman Clyburn, Ranking Member Scalise, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to provide insights into the needs that our nation's cities currently have to safely reopen, and to brief you on how COVID-19 has impacted Columbia, and how the federal government can further help mayors like myself address this public health emergency and the related economic and fiscal crises.

My name is Steve Benjamin and I am currently serving my third term as the Mayor of Columbia, South Carolina. Columbia is a thriving and diverse city that is home to 134,000 people, and the hub of a metropolitan area of 832,000 people. In addition to our state government, Columbia hosts the nearly 50,000 students attending the University of South Carolina, Columbia College, and two historically black colleges, Allen University and Benedict College. Columbia is also the proud home of Fort Jackson, the Army's largest basic training center, which trains approximately 45,000 soldiers per year.

Off the top, let me start by thanking you for all that you and your colleagues are doing to address these crises. There is a lot of discussion and coverage on what has gone wrong and what could be done better. I want to make it clear that I deeply appreciate all that Congress has done. You have acted quickly and decisively and at levels commensurate with the depth and severity of these crises. That said, and even in light of all that you have done, we must all do more. Congress must act decisively to provide the necessary funding and support for our nation's cities, and to make sure that our country emerges from these crises stronger than ever.

I also want to thank this Subcommittee for the work that you are doing to ensure that the relief Congress has provided via the CARES Act and its companion bills is spent wisely and in accordance with the law. This task is an important one. Indeed, oversight is perhaps one of the most critical duties of a legislature in a democracy and I appreciate the work you are doing.

Direct and Targeted Fiscal Assistance to Cities

As has been well documented, I and almost every other mayor in the nation are clear and adamant that the next bill must include ***direct and targeted flexible fiscal assistance to cities***, including funding for ***all cities that are CDBG entitlement cities***.

I am pleased that the HEROES Act approved by the House would appropriate \$375 billion for fiscal assistance to units of local government. The HEROES act also includes funding for a wide array of critical public health, economic and fiscal relief programs. Most economists agree that Congress needs to take bold action to provide fiscal stimulus for the economy. I think Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell did a good job of making the case for such bold action in his testimony to the Senate earlier this week and in earlier comments to the press. Other economists from both sides of the aisle have also made good arguments. I do not think I have much to add, so I will let their words speak for me on why Congress should enact another relief bill, one that includes direct and targeted assistance to local governments.

I will, however, point out that almost every state and local budget forecast predicts a revenue gap for this year and next year. In 2019, state and local tax revenue totaled approximately \$2.4 trillion. A 10 percent reduction in revenue, an optimistic forecast, therefore totals \$240 billion. Quoting a recent Brookings report the extraordinary local fiscal gap we are facing:

“is structural: state and local governments in America are extraordinarily exposed and vulnerable in times of crisis – they lack the revenue sharing by national government that other advanced economies have. Without immediate federal aid, they cannot offer vital services, and their layoffs – the nearly 20 million state and local government workers

across the county (including schools and hospitals) are also consumers – will feed into a vicious cycle, acting as a drag on recovery, as we saw during the Great Recession.”¹

Simply put, absent flexible federal fiscal assistance, state and local governments will be forced to lay off employees, cut services, and take other measures that undermine any countercyclical fiscal and monetary actions taken at the federal level.

The Brookings report includes a simple policy recommendation, and I endorse it:

“Second, because needs will vary across states and over time, including some regions where economic recovery will be especially hard, Congress should move quickly to see that state and local governments have the most flexible access to funds already appropriated and well as new funding to provide fiscal relief.”²

Mayors are adamant that the next relief bill must include **direct and targeted flexible fiscal assistance to cities** for good reason. The 500,000 population limit for the \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund in the CARES Act is arbitrary at best. Every local government is going to have their budget hurt by the virus, there is no magic fairy dust that is going to shelter cities with fewer than 500,000 residents from the fiscal disaster cities are facing. Local government revenue losses are going to be severe for all cities.

We are working with the state to get a share of their Coronavirus Relief Fund allocation. But I don't understand why we need to be doing this. Columbia has always used federal funds

¹<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2020/03/24/federal-fiscal-aid-to-cities-and-states-must-be-massive-and-immediate/>

²<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2020/03/24/federal-fiscal-aid-to-cities-and-states-must-be-massive-and-immediate/>

effectively and responsibly – there is no reason we should have to beg the county to share funds with us.

In Columbia we project more than \$20 million in revenue loss for the next fiscal year's budget. Cities are facing major public health and public safety challenges at the same time we are facing an unprecedented fiscal crisis. Simply put, demand and need for core local government services has increased significantly at the same time we are all projecting unprecedented levels of revenue loss. Cities need real money - direct and targeted assistance such as the \$375 billion included in the HEROES Act - to ensure that we can continue to address this crisis, provide basic services, and avoid layoffs and service cuts that exacerbate the economic impact of the virus.

The Administration has said consistently that this is a locally executed, state managed, and federally supported operation. Without federal support, local governments will not be able to execute, and this problem will only get worse and lengthen the eventual recovery. Absent this support, local governments will be forced to cut services and staff, exacerbating the economic crisis.

I also fear the impact that this crisis could have on the municipal bond market and our bond rating. State and local governments account for 75 percent of our nation's infrastructure investment, with most of those investments financed with municipal bonds. Absent direct and flexible assistance to local governments, this crisis could dampen critical infrastructure investments for many years.

Even for those cities that will receive a share of the \$150 billion, the CARES Act falls short. Transit agencies are allowed to use their CARES Act funding to cover revenue loss and operating expenses. Airports are allowed to use their CARES Act funding to cover revenue loss and

operating expenses. It seems that Congress gave everybody *but* state and local government flexibility.

I appreciate that Representative Don Bacon and Salud Carbajal have introduced bipartisan legislation (HR 6652), the Flexibility for Localities and Eligibility Expansion Act, which would retroactively provide flexibility to the Coronavirus Relief Fund. I also appreciate the inclusion of a similar provision in the HEROES Act and I urge Congress to act on this issue.

Columbia's Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

In recent weeks, we have heard disturbing and unsubstantiated arguments from some of your colleagues and some Administration officials against providing direct fiscal assistance to local governments to help us address the public health, economic, and fiscal crises arising from COVID-19. I therefore appreciate this opportunity to provide you with a summary of COVID-19 response efforts in Columbia.

I have included a timeline of our response efforts as an appendix to this testimony. However, I want to take this opportunity to highlight an especially successful City of Columbia program – Resilient Columbia – that has already provided \$1.4 million in assistance to 323 Columbia small business that were largely ignored by the Paycheck Protection Program and other federal programs targeted to small businesses. The success of Resilient Columbia reinforces our arguments about the importance of providing direct and flexible fiscal assistance to local government to support COVID-19 relief efforts, bolster local economies, and maintain core local government services.

Indeed, the success of Resilient Columbia, the gaps in federal programs that it has filled, Columbia's strong fiscal performance over the past decade, and the obvious damage this crisis is going to do to our budget through no fault of our own all lay waste to specious and irresponsible

arguments that cities will mismanage federal assistance, are seeking federal assistance to “paper over” past financial mismanagement, or simply do not need such assistance.

The City Council unanimously approved and launched Resilient Columbia on March 20th. This local business loan program has achieved impressive results, as outlined in the attached presentation. I have included an overview of Resilient Columbia as an appendix to this testimony. In short, it included two programs:

- (1) The **Small Business Forgivable Loan Program**, which provides zero-interest forgivable loans for small local businesses; the SBSF provides \$1.4 million to support Small Local Business; and
- (2) A **grant program for non-profit service providers**, which provides \$500,000 for non-profits that provide services/supplies to our most vulnerable populations.

Contrary to arguments that local governments will mismanage federal assistance or will use it to “paper over” past fiscal mismanagement, the City of Columbia has used local funds to fill the gaps left by well-intentioned but underfunded & poorly targeted federal programs. If Congress provides direct and targeted fiscal assistance to local governments, the City of Columbia will be able to bolster and continue funding Resilient Columbia, ensuring the continued viability of the small businesses that are the core of our local economy.

In addition, I would point out to those who accuse local governments of past mismanagement that Columbia, like all local governments, must balance our budget. We are proud that not only have we done so, we have ended most years with a surplus, all without raising taxes while continually improving core local government services. Contrary to the unsubstantiated and specious claims of armchair critics ensconced in Washington, the City of Columbia delivers core local government services that are the foundation of our economy, and we do it well and efficiently.

To those critics of local governments who argue we will not need assistance if we simply “reopen” our economy: setting aside the public health and moral shortcomings of such an argument, even in the best scenario there is no credible economist or budget analyst who believes that local government revenues are going to come roaring back once we “reopen” the economy, whether we do so next week or next month. We are facing, through no fault of our own, a dire reduction in revenue that will likely endure through the end of this year.

Columbia is not alone in doing a good job of living within our means while providing essential services. As a Wall Street Journal article recently pointed out, state and local governments have been extraordinarily good fiscal stewards over the past decade. I have included that article³ as an appendix to my testimony and I urge you all to read it, paying particular attention to the graph at the top of the article.

Municipal Bonds

Municipal bonds are the bread and butter of infrastructure investment. Unfortunately, the crisis has frozen the bond market and driven up borrowing costs. I appreciate the Federal Reserve’s plans to use some Section 13(3) emergency loan authority provided by the CARES Act to purchase \$500 billion short term municipal securities issues by states and large cities and counties. I especially appreciate that earlier this week they expanded the program to include cities of 250,000 population and above. These are good first moves to address the municipal bond crisis. Nevertheless, they still leave every city in South Carolina out in the cold.

I would urge Congress to provide the Federal Reserve with additional authority to maintain our nation’s core infrastructure investment tool beyond this crisis. Absent such action, I fear that

³<https://www.wsj.com/articles/states-were-prudent-heres-why-they-need-a-bailout-anyway-11589462541?shareToken=stce91f1d882754e2190ed816f92d9e187>

this crisis will still do significant damage to the municipal bond market. As a reminder, state and local governments account for 75 percent of our nation's infrastructure investment, with most of those investments financed with municipal bonds. Absent direct and flexible assistance to local governments, this crisis could dampen critical infrastructure investments for many years.

Legislation such as Senator Menendez's Municipal Bond Emergency Relief Act (S 3550), which would allow the Federal Reserve to buy municipal debt to help local and state governments finance the delivery of key public services due to the coronavirus emergency, seems like a good approach and I would urge you to look at it.

Looking ahead past the crisis, Congress' ill-advised repeal of tax-exempt advanced refunding of municipal bonds in the Tax Cut & Jobs Act has further complicated the municipal bond market. At the most basic level, our ability to continue major building and construction projects will be a key component to stimulating the economy and maintaining jobs during this crisis. However, the repeal of the tax exemption for advanced refunding means we are taking major risks given bond market uncertainty. For example, why would a local government issue \$30 million in bonds at a 4 percent interest rate if it we cannot take advantage of lower rates after the crisis?

Local Government Paid leave Reimbursement

The Families First Act (PL 116-127) includes paid sick leave and paid family leave for employees grappling with coronavirus, including local government employees. This assistance will be valuable for many of my city's workers and their families and to our efforts to protect public health by having people who are sick stay home. I appreciate its inclusion in the Families First Act. However, I am puzzled by the law's different treatment of private companies and public employers. Both are required to provide paid sick leave, but only private sector employers will receive a tax credit to offset the costs. Public sector employers are explicitly prohibited from receiving those same tax breaks. Given the budget pressures local governments are already

facing, this disparate treatment makes little sense. I am pleased that the HEROES Act includes a provision to address this disparity and I hope the next relief bill includes such a provision.

Frontline Workers

I cannot overstate how proud and appreciative I am of Columbia's frontline workers. Simply put, they truly are heroes. However, we should appreciate their service at all times. I firmly believe that the coronavirus crisis has simply highlighted that they are one of the foundations of our society, making sure our cities are safe, our people have health care, our parents and grandparents are cared for, and that our store shelves are stocked.

I wish I had the time and space to provide the Subcommittee with information about all of our essential front line heroes in Columbia. It is hard to single any of them out. Nevertheless, I would like to take this opportunity to provide insight from a couple of them.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly been a challenging and sometimes frightening time for our Water Distribution staff. Many have stepped up to fill the gaps left by co-workers who were unable to report to work due to age or an underlying medical condition. Our staff has responded with a great sense of responsibility for providing critical, life sustaining water for our customer base of approximately 400,000 people." - Jeremy Yates, Assistant Superintendent of Water Distribution, Columbia Water

"These are unprecedented times for law enforcement. We didn't have a playbook for dealing with a global pandemic. We, at the Columbia Police Department have drawn strength from each other and the community to persevere through the COVID-19 crisis with health and safety at the forefront."

-Skip Holbrook, Chief of Police, Columbia Police Department

Let me be clear when I say that we should appreciate the service of frontline workers, we need more than symbolic gestures. Those symbolic gestures are certainly appropriate, and I am sure well received. But they are not enough for people who are risking their health and their family's health to provide us with essential services. That is why it is so disappointing to read articles like the one I read in the Wall Street Journal under the headline "Retailers Phase Out Coronavirus Hazard Pay for Essential Workers."⁴ I appreciate that companies need to keep their eyes on the bottom line, but this headline struck a chord. We need to make sure our front line essential workers are taken care of.

I am therefore pleased that the HEROES Act passed by the House includes several provisions that would provide assistance to front line essential workers, including COVID-19 Heroes Fund Grants to employers to provide premium pay to essential workers, \$850 million in additional Social Service Block Grant (SSBG) funding to fund child and family care for essential workers, tax deductions for work-related expenses, supplies, and equipment, and a payroll tax credit for pandemic-related employee benefit expenses, hazard pay for janitorial services at air traffic control towers and other FAA facilities.

Looking further ahead, I would urge Congress to ponder a question a headline attempted to answer. It was the headline for an article⁵ in the business section of the Washington Post and the headline was: "Why many essential workers get paid so little, according to experts. The sub-headline read: "There are four key reasons, economist say, including an entrenched power differential. The issues raised in that article and many like it run deeper than I can go in this testimony, but a common thread is that we have the means to address this issue if we can muster the will to do so.

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<https://www.wsj.com/articles/retailers-phase-out-coronavirus-hazard-pay-for-essential-workers-11589915679>

⁵<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/04/06/why-do-so-many-essential-workers-get-paid-so-little-heres-what-economists-have-say/>

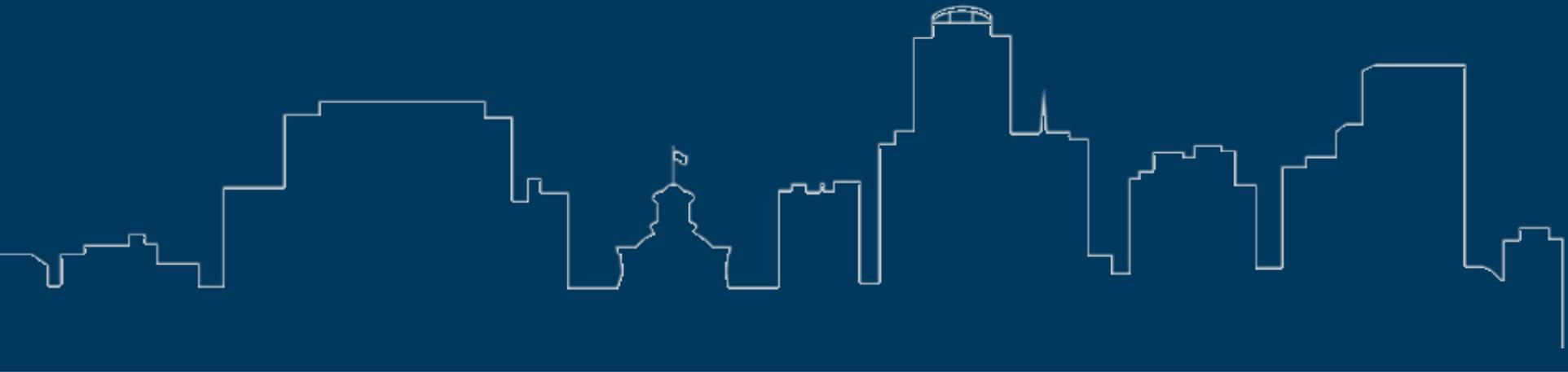
Conclusion

In addition to these priorities, Columbia is also fully supportive of additional assistance to small businesses to make sure that can survive this pandemic and hit the ground running when we beat COVID-19. Indeed, as outlined above, Columbia launched a very successful small business assistance program that has helped dozens of our small businesses unable to tap into the SBA Paycheck Protection Program.

I am also pleased that the CARES Act and its successor includes funding for CDBG, homeless assistance grants, and nutrition programs that will provide a lifeline to many of our most vulnerable residents as well as for testing that will be critical to reopening our economy. I cannot overstate how much I appreciate these measures. Looking ahead, I believe we will need additional assistance to small business to help keep many Columbia small businesses afloat. I also urge you to support this additional assistance, and to also support additional funding for programs such as CDBG, homeless assistance grants, rental assistance and nutrition programs, and to ensure that we have the testing capacity needed to safely reopen the economy.

Thank you for highlighting the needs of cities to reopen safely during this pandemic, for your work in this Subcommittee, and for this opportunity to share Columbia's response to date and our priorities for a future relief bill.

A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan



Columbia, SC
March 20, 2020

A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan

Purpose

- To address possible and known impacts of COVID 19 on small businesses and non-profits across the City as well as impacts to the City's budget and ability to provide seamless delivery of public services in response to emergencies



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A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan

Impacts on City Revenues

- General Fund – Decline in Business license revenues due to loss of income and possible closures.
- Hospitality Tax, Tourism Development Fee and Accommodations Tax – Hospitality industry is significantly impacted and collections from these revenue sources are expected to decline.



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A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan

Areas of Concern

- Overarching concerns exist in the community regarding gap assistance for small businesses and non-profit service providers.
- As a result of the expected impact on Hospitality Tax collections, there is a concern regarding sustainability of allocations to Hospitality Tax organizations.
- This unprecedented event has placed an additional burden on limited public safety resources. The Columbia Police Department, already not operating at full strength, is tasked with enforcing a curfew and other safety measures.
- Technology improvements are necessary in order to provide opportunities for telecommuting and self-service to customers and the public through on-line services.



A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan

Recommended Funding Source

- Transfer from Water and Sewer Non-Operating Revenues to the General Fund in the amount of \$6,000,000



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A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan

Approved Recommendations

- Establish a Small Business & Non-Profit Stabilization Package - \$2,000,000
- Reduce the Hospitality Tax transfer to the General Fund by \$925,000 which reflects the last 3 months' portion of the transfer. This would help to ensure continuation of existing allocations and build a reserve.
- Provide funding for CPD recruitment and retention plan needed to position the department to be competitive as we strengthen the City's ability to respond in emergencies - \$2,000,000
- Provide funding for additional public safety initiatives needed to strengthen the City's ability to respond in emergencies (Fire, 911, Emergency Management) and Information Technology enhancements for on-line service delivery to the public - \$1,000,000
- Waive penalties for Hospitality Tax and Tourism Development Fee collections through June 2020. The City will continue to monitor our customers' needs and action of Richland County to provide consistent action.
- Waive fees for on-line credit card payments.
- Allocation to Senior Resources in the amount of \$250,000 for emergency senior nutrition program.



A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan

Actions Already Taken

- Deadline for Business License payments extended to May 15th
- Bagging parking meters near restaurants for quick access for to-go orders
- Established Economic Development new website for small business resources and developed survey for helping to identify needs of small businesses:
- Small Business Survey
- <https://www.columbiasc.net/headlines/03-19-2020/ImpactofCOVID-19onSmallBusinessSurvey>
- Small Business Support Website
- <https://www.choosecolumbiasc.com/about/covid-19-resources/>



A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan

For Persons and Families Experiencing Homelessness

- United Way of the Midlands is coordinating Homeless Services providers for adults and families to provide information and access to resources.
- Richland library has helped to compile a list and we are also reaching out to partners daily for updates of available resources:

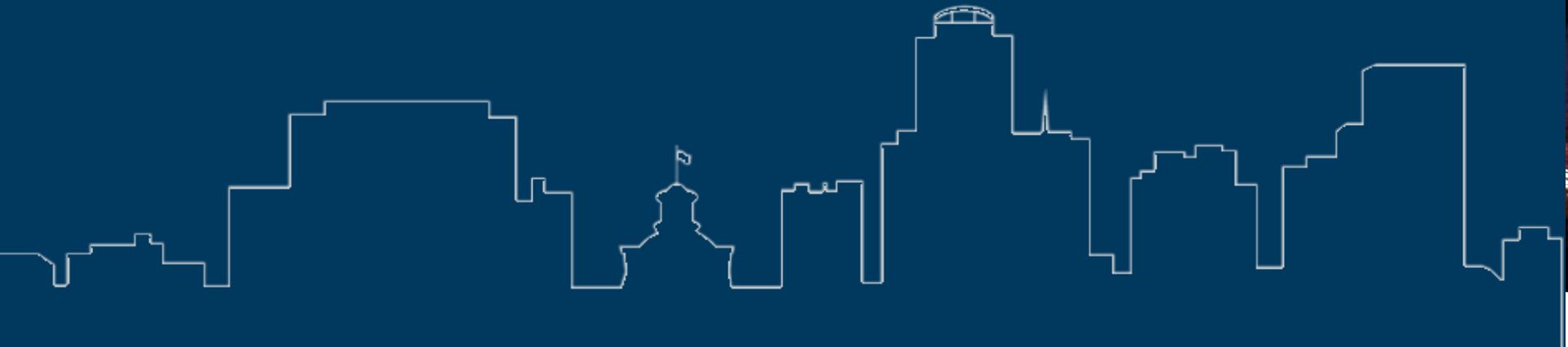
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Uqryy5ervRQ_Hw2Nuu8torSZZm_f9QwW/view?usp=sharing

- SCDHEC is providing sheltering methods for homeless populations who are require quarantine or isolation.
- Those able are encouraged to continue supporting the community service providers who are providing direct services for vulnerable populations. United Way of the Midlands and Central Carolina Community foundation have set up funds for COVID-10 Response funds focused on assisting those in this community affected by income or job loss to assist with basic needs including food, emergency sheltering and longer term needs for rent, utilities and other needs.
 - United Way of the Midlands COVID 10 Response: www.uway.org/covid19
 - OneSC Fund: <https://yourfoundation.org/give-now/midlands-community-response-fund/>



A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan

Small Business and Non Profit Stabilization Program



Columbia, SC
March 20, 2020

A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan
Small Business and Non Profit Stabilization Package

Existing and Pending Legislation

- Federal
 - HR6201 / passed on 3/18/2020
 - targets businesses with 500 or fewer businesses
 - Payroll credit for required paid sick leave
 - Credit for sick leave for self-employed individuals required to self-isolate
 - Pending federal legislation for 500 or greater employees
- SBA EIDL (Economic Injury Disaster Loan)
 - Up to \$2M for Max term of 30 years @ 3.75% interest for profits and 2.75% interest for private non-profits
 - Used for working capital (fixed debt, payroll, accounts payable, other bill that could have been paid had the disaster not occurred)
 - No costs to apply
 - Eligible businesses must meet size standards based on NAICS code
 - No collateral required for loans up to \$25K
 - Physical presence in disaster zone
 - 30 day turn around application to funds in hand



A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan
Small Business and Non Profit Stabilization Package

City Activities to Date in Support of Small Business

- Small Business Survey
- Citywide and Individual Department Websites specific to Business Support
 - City of Columbia <https://www.columbiasc.net/>
 - Economic Development
<https://www.choosecolumbiasc.com/about/covid-19-resources/>
 - Office Business Opportunities <https://www.columbiasc.net/obo>
- Social Media Releases supporting businesses
- Bagging of Parking Meters for Restaurant Take Out Access
- Encourage consideration of rent relief for small business
- Commercial Revolving Loan Fund Recipients (~37 Businesses in City)
 - Deferment of Loan Payment for a 3 month period
or
 - Make interest only payment for 6 months



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A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan
Small Business and Non Profit Stabilization Package

Proposed Program Recommendation 1
Establishment of COLA Loan-Loss Revenue Fund (LLRF)

- City establish Loss-Loan Revenue Fund in amount of \$1M
 - 10% loss reserve per loan or max of \$25K
- Collaboration between City and local private financial institutions
- City's funds will be used to leverage greater amount (upwards of \$4M) from banks and CDFI's
- Serve as credit enhancement for disaster assistance
- LLRF serves as protection for lenders making loans up to \$250K to small businesses from disruptions caused by COVID-19
- Partner with Banks and/or CDFI's
 - Financial institution responsible for underwriting and servicing the loans
- Opportunity to Leverage with SBA General Business Loan Guarantee Program



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A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan
Small Business and Non Profit Stabilization Package

Proposed Program Recommendation 2
Small Business Forgivable Loan Program

- Establish Forgivable Loan Program in amount of \$500,000
 - Economic Development Small Business Stabilization Package to address impact of COVID-19 to small businesses across the City
 - Zero Interest Forgivable Loan
- Small / Local Business
 - Under 100 employees (FTE's and PTE's)
 - No franchise / chains
 - Online applications to be accepted
 - Gap Funding/ not intended to replicate existing programs or opportunities
 - Ability to demonstrate negative impact of COVID-19
- Recommended Areas of Assistance (with Documented Monthly Operating Expenses)
 - Lease/Mortgage Assistance
 - Utility Assistance
 - Vendor supplier payments
 - Other



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A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan

Small Business and Non Profit Stabilization Package

Proposed Small Business Forgivable Loan Program

***Target Business Types**

- Restaurant, Hotel and Tourism
- Retail
- Barber Shops & Hair/Nail Salons
- Small Event Venues
- Professional Services
- Cleaning Services
- Health Care Industry
 - Medical services not related to COVID-19
- Other service industries
- Manufacturing Sector

*not intended to be all inclusive but illustrative of impacted industries



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A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan
Small Business and Non Profit Stabilization Package

Proposed Program Recommendation 3
Establishment of Grant Program for Non Profit Service Providers

- Establish Grant Program for Non Profit Service Providers in amount of \$500,000
- Targeted for Non Profit Agencies that provide services/supplies to most vulnerable population to include seniors, high risk and underserved communities
- Support programs that address unmet needs of our vulnerable population



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A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan
Small Business and Non Profit Stabilization Package
Government Support/Programs

City of Columbia

Small Business Survey <https://www.columbiasc.net/headlines/03-19-2020/ImpactofCOVID-19onSmallBusinessSurvey>

Small Business Support Websites <https://www.columbiasc.net/>
<https://www.choosecolumbiasc.com/about/covid-19-resources/>
<https://www.columbiasc.net/obo>

SBA, Coronavirus (COVID-19): Small Business Guidance & Loan Resources:

<https://www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources>

SBA Disaster Loan Assistance <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>

SCEMD <https://scemd.org/stay-informed/business-operations/>

SC Unemployment Office <https://dew.sc.gov/individuals/apply-for-benefits>

IRS - The Treasury Department and IRS just announced a three-month delay for any tax payments owed up to \$1 million. Filings must be completed by April 15, 2020 but you will have until July 15th to pay. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm948>



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A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan

Small Business and Non Profit Stabilization Package

Private and Non Profit Support Links

United Way: www.uway.org/covid19

Central Carolina Community Foundation <https://yourfoundation.org/cccf-responds-to-covid-19/>

Dominion: <https://www.dominionenergy.com/company/community/dominion-energy-charitable-foundation/coronavirus-relief>

Facebook Small Business Grants: <https://www.facebook.com/business/boost/grants>

JPMorgan Chase, Entrepreneurs of Color Fund, Ascend, and Community Development Financial Institution Partners, funding limit TBD, \$8M donation:

<https://impact.jpmorganchase.com/impact/our-approach/small-business-expansion>

Community Support Opportunities <https://colatoday.6amcity.com/give-back-to-community-columbia-sc/>



A Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan
Small Business and Non Profit Stabilization Package

Recommendations for City Programs

- Identify funding to provide support to small business and non profit service providers that cannot access federal or state support or have expenses that are not eligible via those federal/state programs
 - \$1M for Loss Loan Revenue Fund (LLRF)
 - \$500K for Small Business Forgivable Loan Program
 - \$500K for Non Profit Service Industry Forgivable Loan Program
- Allow staff to work with partner agencies to leverage funds while balancing turn around time for support
- Allow staff to develop programs with flexibility based on industry specific stress points recognized in the coming weeks
- Seek grant opportunities via external opportunities as they are made available



We Are Columbia



CITY OF COLUMBIA
SOUTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

City of Columbia COVID-19 Actions Timeline

- 3/1: Mayor Benjamin establishes the Midlands Coronavirus Task Force
- 3/6: Midlands Coronavirus task force first meeting
- 3/10: City Council Temporarily Suspends Normal Operating Procedures of Council Meetings (2020-027)
 - encourages public to live stream; moves to 4 members in person, 3 call-in
 - McDowell, Isaac-Devine, & Brennan call-in to the council meeting
- 3/11: Mayor Benjamin receives update from White House Senior officials
- 3/11: 5 Points St. Patrick's Day Events are canceled; Decision supported by City of Columbia
- 3/13: Resolution to encourage Richland & Lexington County Magistrates to Stay evictions is proposed
- 3/13: Letter sent to all employees encouraging canceling work-related travel, non-essential in-person meetings, and encouraging hand washing and sick employees to stay home
- 3/15: Parks & Recreation closes all City parks
- 3/16: Mayor Benjamin Declares a State of Emergency
- 3/16: Access to public buildings restricted, water/sewer service terminations are suspended, non-essential employees were told to work on staggered schedules
- 3/16: Public Input Form placed on the website
- 3/17: Meters in front of restaurants are "bagged" for pickup/take out customers
- 3/17: City Council approves the State of Emergency, and enacts 11pm-6am curfew (2020-031)
- 3/18: Mayor Benjamin accepts role as informal advisor to Bloomberg Philanthropies
Coronavirus Local Response Initiative
- 3/18: Columbia City Council & Senior Staff receive update from Prisma Health CEO & Doctors
- 3/18: Mayor Benjamin receives update from White House Senior officials
- 3/18: Mayor Benjamin signs on to USCM letter requesting \$250 billion in aid sent directly to cities; letters also sent to Senators Graham & Scott, and Congressman Clyburn
- 3/18: Columbia Food Policy Committee creates list of food non-profits needs and resources
- 3/19: Mayor Benjamin participates in Harvard Bloomberg Video Call
- 3/19: Economic Development launches website to provide information to local businesses
- 3/20: Special Called Meeting of Columbia City Council
- 3/20: City Council approves \$6 million economic package; includes funding for Senior Resources, Non-profits, small businesses, and first responders.
- 3/23: Mayor Benjamin conferences with the directors of United Way & Central Carolina Community Foundation to establish coordination of funds to businesses and non-profits
- 3/24: Mayor Benjamin conferences with business leaders & The Chamber of Commerce

Stephen K. Benjamin

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SOUTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

- 3/26: Mayor Benjamin participates in first Harvard Bloomberg Video Call
- 3/26: City Council enacts "Stay Home, Stay Safe" Ordinance (2020-034)
- 3/26: Mayor Benjamin holds press conference to discuss details of the new ordinance
- 3/27: Mayor Benjamin & City Staff plant wildflowers as a symbol of hope
- 3/29: "Stay Home, Stay Safe" Ordinance goes into effect
- 4/2: City Council approves Ordinance 2020-036 - Emergency Order Incorporating the Governor's Executive Order of Non-Essential Business Listing into Stay Home Stay Safe Ordinance.
- 4/6: Columbia Youth Commission shares a "Tips for Teens" Tik Tok coronavirus video
- 4/7: City Council conducts a regularly scheduled Meeting & ratifies and approves the Resilient Columbia: Economic Sustainability Plan
- 4/7: City Council approves contract with Precision Genetics
- 4/9: City Council meets and allows the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" ordinance to expire, and renews the city wide curfew for an additional 61 days
- 4/15: Mayor Benjamin's first meeting co-leading the Pandemic Resilience Working Group for America's Mayors Sponsored by the COVID19 Study Group at the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University
- 4/21: City Council conducts a regularly scheduled meeting & receives an update on the City's Small Business Stabilization Program. An additional \$400,000 was added to the program
- 4/23: Mayor Benjamin hosts the second Midlands Coronavirus Task Force, with over 70 leaders of the Midlands on the line and many others watching live
- 4/24: The first convening of the Midlands Health Disparities Task Force is held
- 4/30: Local "Mayor's for Masks" Initiative is launched, w/ SKB leading national group and Mayor Partin & Mayor Drakeford leading the local group
- 4/31: Group of business leaders hold first ZOOM call to discuss business reopening strategies
- 5/1: First meeting of Economic Recovery Task Force, allowing local business leaders, city officials and Chamber representatives to provide strategies on best models for safe reopening of Columbia businesses.
- 5/8: Second meeting of the Economic Recovery Task Force. Subcommittee's established and asked to provide a report during the next meeting
- 5/12: City Council conducts a meeting where a budget workshop was conducted and City staff recommends the opening of greenways and open spaces in public parks
- 5/15: Peace of Mind program launches, allowing City first responders and local COVID-19 related care givers safe and comfortable resting places at no charge to them in participating Columbia-area hotels.

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CITY OF COLUMBIA
SOUTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

- 5/15: Third meeting of the Economic Recovery Task Force. The 7 subcommittee provided reports.
- 5/19: City of Columbia launches Resilient Columbia micro-site, providing businesses with economic resources and re-opening best practice guidelines, as well as providing listing of sites where public has access to free COVID-19 testing.
- 5/21: City of Columbia begins placement of unified theme/design social distancing and business operation guideline graphics in outdoor, business and other public spaces.
- 5-28: Fourth meeting of the Economic Recovery Task Force
- 5/29: Mayor Benjamin provides testimony before US House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis.

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