



Legislation Text

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Clerk 02/09/2021

A MOTION setting the county's priorities for allocation of federal and state COVID-19 relief moneys available in 2021.

WHEREAS, as of February 7, 2021, there have been 78,686 positive cases of coronavirus disease 2019 ("COVID-19") and 1,299 deaths due to COVID-19 illness in King County, and

WHEREAS, the significant progression of COVID-19 in Washington state prompted the Governor's "Stay Home - Stay Healthy," order which was issued on March 23, 2020, and amended on May 31, 2020, to be the "Safe Start - Safety Healthy" order, and

WHEREAS, the significant progression of COVID-19 in Washington state and the public safety preventative measures, including social distancing and the Governor's order, are causing devastating effects on the physical health, mental health, behavioral health and well-being of residents and are exacerbating the incidence of substance use disorder and homelessness, and

WHEREAS, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are also causing extraordinary, unprecedented and devastating effects on the economy which have led to the highest levels of unemployment in recorded history in King County and Washington state, and

WHEREAS, state and local government revenues have plummeted in an extremely short amount of time, and

WHEREAS, the pandemic has hit for-profit and nonprofit organizations alike in a devastating manner, and

WHEREAS, on March 27, 2020, the federal government adopted the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and

Economic Security Act ("CARES Act"), which provided relief to state and local governments through a variety of federal agencies and programs, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA"), the Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grants and Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund through Health and Human Services, as well the Treasury Department's Coronavirus Relief Fund to cover costs that state and local governments have incurred in their responses to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19, and

WHEREAS, on May 26, 2020, the council passed Motion 15638 setting the county's priorities for allocation of the CARES Act moneys, which informed the adoption of five emergency supplemental appropriation ordinances totaling more than \$320 million for necessary expenditures preparing for and responding to the mitigating impact of and preventing COVID-19 throughout the county, and

WHEREAS, the county anticipates receiving additional federal and state COVID-19 relief moneys in 2021 and the council has identified expenditure priorities that should receive preference when the executive is considering proposals for allocation of those moneys;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The county reasserts its highest priority for allocation of COVID-19 federal and state relief moneys to direct the county's COVID-19 response, including testing; contact tracing; isolation and quarantine, assessment and recovery, and shelter de-intensification sites; technical support to community organizations and vaccination distribution and administration. It is the intent of the council that the county's public health response be flexible, nimble, effective and adaptive to unforeseen developments in the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

B. The county shall use a principled approach based on our equity and social justice values and in promoting antiracist outcomes in the allocation of COVID-19 relief moneys to ensure assistance is provided where it is needed most. Investments in public health should ensure the health and safety of all in our county and should be supported by the expertise of the county's personnel who follow science-based practices. The

intention of using a principled approach is to: focus on immediate relief while recognizing and increasingly planning for our long-term recovery; meeting our residents' basic needs, especially for food and housing stability; ensuring uninterrupted delivery of our core essential services, while still exercising responsible spending and accountability measures; and ensuring future needs be met, while creating immediate solutions that are sufficiently thoughtful to ensure lasting impacts.

C. The county shall prioritize a narrow range of services to ensure that limited federal and state relief moneys have the most-effective recovery impact and avoid duplication of services or having several agencies providing the same service. Also, where possible, the county should prioritize utilizing existing programs, developed in 2020 through CARES Act funding, that can quickly and effectively get relief funding out into communities in need.

D. The county recognizes the administrative burdens with allocating federal and state COVID-19 relief moneys, such as establishing contracts, abiding by reporting requirements and adhering to complex accounting procedures. The county shall make an effort to limit administrative burdens for organizations in applying for and receiving of COVID-19 relief moneys. As allowed under federal rules, strategies such as establishing a revolving fund to provide moneys upfront rather than on a reimbursement basis are critical for small organizations that may not have the cash surplus to wait for reimbursement. In addition, in deciding how to allocate those moneys, the county should make an effort to strike a balance between providing resources to established programs that can readily and quickly provide relief to the public and providing resources to smaller or newer community-based organizations that have relationships with the hardest to reach communities.

E. The county's priorities for allocation of COVID-19 relief moneys available in 2021 above amounts needed for the county's direct emergency response should be allocated for the following, in no particular order:

1. Food security and access services. Those services may take the form of food banks, organizations providing meals, such as senior centers, community centers, schools or organizations connecting farmers with the market and those most in need of food, while ensuring culturally appropriate food options remain available.

The county should also consider the acquisition of centralized cold storage and refrigeration trucks for movement of produce;

2. Housing stability and homelessness services. Those services will keep people connected to housing, keep them in their homes and provide protections for those unable to pay their housing and face eviction or foreclosure. The county should also prioritize increasing the number of twenty-four hour, seven-days-a-week noncongregate sheltering, continue efforts aimed at shelter deintensification and be mindful of the unique needs faced by the immigrant, refugee and undocumented populations;

3. Child care and workforce support services. Those services should support child care for children of first responders, essential workers and other individuals in the workforce who have been economically impacted by the public health emergency. The services should also include both preserving and increasing existing child care programs and providing funding assistance if needed to families with children. If allowed by federal rules, assistance should be provided to stimulate job creation through development of job training programs. As much as possible, the county should expand access to education, vaccination and other services important to workers by providing equitable digital access to individuals who were not included in the digital equity program established in 2020 through CARES Act moneys;

4. Economic recovery services. Those services should be prioritized to assist key institutions, such as private businesses, including small businesses, nonprofit organizations, local chambers of commerce, community-based organizations, cities and the unincorporated area and in particular the hospitality industry, which includes the travel and tourism sector, arts and culture sector, food and beverage sector and the lodging sector;

5. Mental health, behavioral health, substance use disorder, safety and security services. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic public health emergency have hit vulnerable populations particularly hard and have resulted in increased reporting of individuals struggling with mental health, behavioral health and substance use disorder. Services providing support for those suffering from domestic violence or intimate partner abuse, and

sexual violence, child abuse and neglect and chronic substance use disorder should be prioritized, including those services that focus on unhoused populations; and

6. The judicial system. In-person access to the judicial system has been limited due to social distancing requiring an increase in conducting businesses virtually. Such practices restrict the courts' ability to effectively administer cases and have exacerbated inequities in accessing the judicial system, particularly for residents with limited digital access and proficiency, disabilities and limited English proficiency. Providing support for equitable access to the judicial system and ensuring the justice system can operate fairly and equitably should be prioritized.

F. The council requests that the county executive prioritize the principles, services and programs in sections A. through E. of this motion in the proposals allocating federal and state COVID-19 relief moneys that are available in 2021.