



Office of the Mayor-President

City of Baton Rouge
Parish of East Baton Rouge

222 St. Louis Street
Post Office Box 1471
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821

225 389-3100
Fax 225 389-5203

SHARON WESTON BROOME
Mayor-President

March 24, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

First, thank you for what you and the White House Coronavirus Task Force are doing to lead our nation through this unprecedented fight to prevent, contain and mitigate the spread of the coronavirus disease. As the Mayor of the City of Baton Rouge and the Parish President of East Baton Rouge Parish, I am writing to bring to your attention two critical matters that, if not immediately addressed under your leadership, have the potential to tip the COVID-19 fight against our community.

As you know, local governments and many of our essential personnel are on the front lines of this fight, addressing this novel pandemic and taking continuous actions to ensure we are able to provide for and protect our citizens. The White House has stated it is taking an “All of America” approach to this fight; similarly, my parish has embraced a “Whole Community” approach to navigating our way through this crisis, enacting our All Hazards Recovery Plan and relying on the good graces of dedicated citizens and businesses to help us through this. As an example of this approach, through local coordination between my office and volunteer hospital resources and manpower, our community stood up last week a Community Testing Site to test citizens for the virus, providing critical relief to our local hospital emergency rooms.

However, Mr. President, local government budgets were not designed for a pandemic like this. We need the full weight of every federal department to support us through this crisis. In Louisiana, our State is accustomed to responding to disasters of multiple types and magnitudes; however, this global pandemic has overwhelmed even the most meticulous and proactive planning we have implemented.

As a member of the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ (USCM), I was proud to sign that organization’s March 20, 2020, letter to Congressional leaders, requesting \$250 billion of direct emergency assistance to cities. Financial support to local governments in the form of Disaster Loans will be critical as we continue moving forward in this fight and in our regular course of business for our communities. From the litany of concerns expressed in USCM letter, two issues rise to the top of the priority list in East Baton Rouge Parish that would most immediately aid us in mitigating the spread of this virus, and that I feel compelled to call to your attention:

First, invoking the Defense Protection Act (DPA) to increase the domestic production of medical supplies and equipment, also known as personal protection equipment (PPE), that is sorely needed by our healthcare providers, first responders and others leading our community through this battle. We greatly appreciate you using your executive authority on March 18 to invoke the DPA. In conjunction with our local hospitals and healthcare providers, I urge you to immediately use the DPA to increase the domestic production of medical supplies and equipment, PPE, that our front-line providers and hospitals so desperately need. We have been exhausting our resources and have contacted all viable sources without any success of re-supply. Additionally, my community is launching an effort to seek donations of these supplies, so that our first responders and hospitals are faced with the crisis of depleting these PPE resources. With the State of Louisiana experiencing the most rapid growth of COVID-19 positive patients in the world, per capita, our healthcare providers and first responders urgently need supplies to care for our patients and to protect our citizens. We look to your leadership in helping provide a source for this desperately needed equipment, as I am concerned we are very shortly facing a crisis in this situation.

Second, additional and flexible Emergency Solutions Grant Program (ESG) funding through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) immediately allocated to state and local governments so that our communities can stand up and expand local emergency shelter capacity for our population experiencing homelessness. Mitigating the spread of the coronavirus disease has led our state government to take unprecedented actions, including issuing a statewide “Stay At Home” order, enacted by our Governor on Sunday, March 22, and lasting through April 13. However, Baton Rouge, like many other communities across our nation, has a population of people experiencing homelessness who do not have this as an option. Like other communities, Baton Rouge has a tremendous need to immediately stand up additional, emergency shelter capacity. We need HUD to provide emergency and flexible ESG funding to our states and local governments, so we can stand up, staff and support emergency shelters for our citizens experiencing homelessness. This would help alleviate the spread of the virus amongst a very vulnerable population.

Thank you for all of the efforts, actions and resources you and your administration have already taken. I trust you will give this request every appropriate consideration.

Sincerely,



Sharon Weston Broome
Mayor-President

Cc:

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Louisiana’s Congressional Delegation