

April 26, 2020

Pinellas County Commissioners

Commissioner Janet Long, District 1

Commissioner Pat Gerard, District 2 (2020 Chair)

Commissioner Charlie Justice, District 3

Commissioner Dave Eggers, District 4 (2020 Vice Chair)

Commissioner Karen Williams-Seel, District 5

Commissioner Kathleen Peters, District 6

Commissioner Kenneth Welch, District 7

Pinellas County Administrator Barry A. Burton

Esteemed Commissioners and County Administrator Burton:

We write with an urgent and time-sensitive request that you ensure that the allocation of the \$170 million in CARES Act funding approved for Pinellas County has a focus on equity.

We applaud your many recent actions toward the goal of economic equity. Several of our organizations have recognized County leaders' actions in vital areas such as the overhaul of County procurement policies; the creation of the new Office of Small Business & Supplier Diversity; and affirmative discussions about the creation of a North Greenwood Community Redevelopment Area (CRA).

Your success in tripling the number of minority-owned firms taking part in the County's race-neutral Small Business Enterprise program was honored at the Pinellas County Urban League Annual Gala in 2019. It was also the focus of media coverage by community publications such as *Power Broker* magazine and *The Weekly Challenger* newspaper.

We understand that these successes were the fruit of intentional strategies, and we ask that you apply the same intentional lens to the allocation of emergency resources that will help many remain afloat during this unprecedented economic downturn.

As you know from national reporting, African Americans stand to be among the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, both in potential health impact and in the devastating economic consequences of containment efforts.

The economic impact is expected to be even more severe locally. A comprehensive report by McKinsey & Company (released last week) identifies Pinellas as one of the counties most at risk for economic disruption due to COVID-19, specifically because of its demographic make-up.

Local data illustrate why. In St. Petersburg, which is home to over 60% of the County's African American population...

African Americans Will Suffer More Job Losses: According to a 2019 report on The Economic Status of St. Petersburg's Black Community, two times more African Americans work in service jobs compared to their white neighbors (33% vs 17%), including sectors that suffered the biggest job losses due to shutdown (e.g., hospitality, food service, and personal services).

Black-Owned Businesses Are More Vulnerable: African Americans are hyper-concentrated in business types suffering the biggest revenue losses (e.g., barbershops, beauty salons, restaurants, catering, and event management and services). What's more, these hardest-hit sectors account for a larger share of the community's business revenue. Take haircare as one example. African Americans in St. Petersburg spend approximately \$12.3 million per year with local barbershops and beauty salons, which equates to about 8% of all revenues to black-owned businesses in the City (compared to less than 1% for other businesses in St. Pete).

Fewer Are Eligible for Help: Fewer African Americans are eligible for support from federal, state and local emergency resources (relative to their white neighbors). As examples of why:

- **Ex-offender status** blocks more African Americans from accessing SBA emergency loans.
- Lack of **established bank relationships** and relative inexperience with the systems of accessing capital are well-documented realities for more African American entrepreneurs, which is a crucial factor in securing SBA and other emergency loan programs.
- Only 3% of black entrepreneurs in St. Petersburg have paid workers, which means that 97% of them were **ineligible for the Florida Emergency Bridge Loan**.

Even among African Americans who are eligible for benefits, a smaller share will pursue and win resources (if history repeats). This is for reasons that include **lack of awareness of and facility** with the processes of emergency programs; and **the digital divide**, which will block more African Americans from completing online applications for unemployment and other relief.

Our Collective Response

In response to the crisis, 100+ community leaders have contributed financial and human resources to implement the **#InThisTogether COVID Resiliency Initiative**. Led by the One Community Plan at Pinellas County Urban League, the effort is fielding many of the same programs recommended by the McKinsey report (attached) to buffer African Americans against potentially epic economic losses.

#InThisTogether will support the survival and resiliency of 150+ community businesses, through micro grant programs; social enterprise initiatives that secure contracts for dozens of entrepreneurs; expert help to access emergency loan and grant funding through programs such as the SBA Paycheck Protection Program and the City of St. Petersburg Fighting Chance Fund; and free technologies to help them migrate to e-commerce and virtual work solutions. The initiative will also provide navigator services to hundreds of community residents struggling to cope with the "new normal," to connect them to help.

The initiative has so far raised \$495,000 toward the \$2 million needed to fully implement **#InThisTogether**, including support from the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg, the City of St. Petersburg, the Grow Smarter initiative, the St. Petersburg Downtown Partnership, and The 2020 Fund, along with tens of thousands of dollars in community contributions.

Our Request of County Leaders

We ask for the County's partnership to ensure that African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities are not left out in securing the help they need to survive the crisis. We ask that you advance equity in the following ways:

- Creation of an Equity Advisory Council to conference with County Administrator Barry Burton and his designees to review and develop strategies for achieving equity in resource allocations to distressed communities throughout Pinellas County. The Advisory Council would conference with the Administrator biweekly in May and June 2020 and once monthly thereafter. It would also provide routine reporting on public progress toward an equitable distribution of emergency resources. So as not to delay your fast-paced work, a core team is available for a brief conference at any time during the week of April 27th.
- Coordination and alignment with major resource programs to identify and target gaps, including coordination with the St. Petersburg Fighting Chance Fund to reach business sectors unable to access other resources (e.g., food trucks and home-based businesses); and investment via the One Community Plan to fully implementation **#InThisTogether** business support program for micro businesses and solo-preneurs, who make-up 97% of African American entrepreneurs in St. Petersburg.
- Investments via Pinellas County Urban League and Pinellas Opportunity Council to support emergency assistance, mental health services and wrap-around support to families, including holistic support to those accessing the County's \$4,000 investment in families in need.
- Investments in replicating the **#InThisTogether** resiliency initiative in other lower-income communities throughout the County (e.g., in partnership with the Clearwater Urban Leadership Coalition, which has worked with the One Community Plan team to study the 14-year development process that has led to record-low levels of black poverty and all-time high levels of employment and income for African Americans in St. Petersburg).
- Investment in and coordination with the Special Purpose Loan Pool by the Tampa Bay Black Business Investment Corporation, which is already working with Pinellas County, City of Clearwater and City of St. Petersburg to expand training, counseling and capital access for micro entrepreneurs in South St. Pete, Greenwood, Lake Bellevue, Largo and elsewhere.

We thank you in advance for your immediate attention to this request. See Next Page for List of Co-Signers to this Missive

Enclosed/Attached:

- McKinsey & Company report on COVID-19's impact on African Americans
- Summary of #InThisTogether COVID Resiliency Initiative Components
- Projected Impacts of #InThisTogether Initiative

Co-Signers to this Request for Equity Focus

- Ada McFarley, Owner, Never Late Property Cleaning
- Adrienne Reddick, Citizen
- Albert Lee, CEO, Tampa Bay Black Business Investment Corporation
- Aleyah Conway, Student & Activist
- Andre Blunt, Clearwater Urban Leadership Coalition
- Angela Mendez, Entrepreneur
- Angela Rouson, Executive Director, Mount Zion Human Services
- Annie Tyrell, Registered Nurse & Retired Owner, Annie's Beauty Supply
- Anthony Williams, Community Development & Training Center
- Attorney Constance Coleman, Coleman Law Group
- Attorney Darryl Rouson, Florida Senator, District 19
- Attorney Jacqueline Hubbard, Private Citizen & President, Association for the Study of African American Life and History
- Attorney Tamara Felton, Felton-Howard Law
- Antwaun Wells, Private citizen & President of the Deuces Live
- Briana Hankins, Research Director, Urban Market Analytics
- Bro Jabaar Edmond, Community Development & Training Center
- Bro John Muhammad, CEO, Community Development & Training Center
- Brodus Brown, Owner, Central Station Barbers & Grooming
- Bruce Moore, Jr., Community Development & Training Center
- Carlea Jordan, Bible Institute Teacher Training Program Coordinator
- Carl Lavender, Jr., Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg
- Carolyn King, Retired Executive Director, Pinellas Opportunity Council & Co-Chair, The 2020 Plan
- Charlotte Anderson, Vice President, Pinellas County Urban League
- Chloe Coney, CEO, Community Empowerment Group
- Christina Brown, Citizen
- Christopher Roberts, Owner, St. Pete's Very Own Urban Ink Tattoo Company
- Church Administrator Brenda Williams, Mt. Zion Progressive MB Church
- Claudia Churchill, Entrepreneur
- Consuelo Mackey, Owner, Tabatha Exquisite Touch
- Dajuh Sawyer, Founder, Make It Out Foundation
- David Brown, Citizen
- Deacon William Fitts, Board member, Mount Zion Human Services
- Deborah Figgs-Sanders, St. Petersburg City Councilmember
- Denise Deja, The New Deal
- Devin McTier, The New Deal
- Diane Stephens, Clearwater Urban Leadership Coalition
- Dolores Givens, Owner, Butterfly Village Kids College

- Dontriel Lawson, Vice President, JAPOSID Cleaning
- Dr. Bruce Nissen, Co-Chair, CBA Policy Council, Retired Labor Professor
- Dr. Keesha Benson, Director, Thrive by Five
- Dr. Mendee Ligon, Ligon & Ligon Dental
- Dr. Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, Retired Labor Professor, Former New York Housing Commissioner
- Erie Alston, Owner, Better Care Lawn Service
- Erik Smith, CEO, InclusivityEsther Eugene, Owner, All Administrative Solutions
- Fitzgerald Taylor, Retired Juvenile Justice System Professional
- Foster Lovett, CPA, CEO, Lovett & Company
- Gloria Campbell, Clearwater Urban Leadership Coalition
- Grady Terrell, III, President, Terrell Industries
- Gwendolyn Reese, Private Citizen & President, African American Heritage Association of St. Petersburg
- Gypsy C. Gallardo, CEO, The 2020 Plan & One Community Plan
- Harold Bryant, Jr., The New Deal
- Harvey Landress, Co-Chair, The 2020 Plan
- Hillary Van Dyke, Founder, Green Book of Tampa Bay
- Imam Askia Muhammad Aquil, Chairman, Collective Empowerment Group of the Tampa Bay Area
- Izabelle James, Co-Owner, James Insurance Solutions
- Jai Hinson, Clearwater Urban Leadership Coalition & Executive Director, Artz 4 Life Academy
- Jason Bryant, Owner, New Era Thinking
- Jennie Figueroa, The New Deal
- Joshua Bean, Founder, Green Book of Tampa Bay
- Julian Riley, Executive Director, We Care FL
- Kanithra Mercer, Community Development & Training Center
- Keisha Long-Watson, Owner, InSparkleMe
- Kim Brown, Clearwater Urban Leadership Coalition
- Kimberley Webb, Owner, Suddenly She Sparkles
- Kori Monroe, IROK Construction
- Kristopher McClendon, Owner, Salon Be Spoke
- Krutel Mack, The New Deal
- Leslie Hayes-Coley, Clearwater Urban Leadership Coalition & Owner, Dyvine Appointments
- Linsey Grove, Public Health Educator
- Lorie J. Hollaway, Owner, Cultured Books & Music, LLC
- Louis Murphy, Jr., Retired NFL Veteran & Coach
- Lynn Harrell Johnson, Real Estate Investor
- Marilyn Turman, Clearwater Urban Leadership Coalition
- Marshae Brown, Economic Development Manager, Pinellas County Urban League

- Michael Jalazo, CEO, Pinellas Ex-Offender Re-Entry Coalition
- Michael Moore, Owner, Vonic & Project Manager, Construction
- Misha Wong Moran, Owner, Emdidesigns
- Muhammad Abdur-Rahim, Clearwater Urban Leadership Coalition & Clearwater NAACP
- Pastor Ayakao Watkins, Kingdom Bible Christian Church
- Pastor Bobby Musengwa, Maximo Presbyterian Church
- Pastor Clarence Williams, Greater Mt. Zion AME Church
- Pastor Elizabeth Siplin (Interim), New Faith Free Methodist & CEO, EMPACT Solutions
- Pastor Jay Brubaker, Positive Impact Ministries
- Pastor Kara'Lynn Brubaker, Positive Impact Ministries
- Pastor Kenny Irby, Historic Bethel AME Church
- Pastor Louis M. Murphy, Sr., Mt Zion Progressive Missionary Baptist Church
- Pastor Manuel Sykes, St. Petersburg Social Justice Center & Bethel Community Baptist Church
- Pastor Michael Conway
- Pastor Robert A. Vinson, Jr., Faith Memorial Missionary Baptist Church
- Pastor Shurrea Daniels, Founder, Kingdom Restoration
- Renee Edwards, Owner, Skin Kandii
- Rev. Shawn Thomas, Mt. Zion Progressive Missionary Baptist Church
- Rev. Watson Haynes, II, CEO, Pinellas County Urban League
- Rochelle Highsmith, Artist
- Rowland Johnson, Clearwater Urban Leadership Coalition
- Roy James, Co-Owner, James Insurance Solutions
- Sarah Davis, Clearwater Urban Leadership Coalition
- Shanika Thomas, Citizen
- Sharlene Emmanuel-Swain, Owner of On the Beat St Pete and Power Plug Radio
- Tahisia Scantling, CEO, Crossroad Consulting
- Terri Lipsey Scott, Private Citizen & Chairperson, Dr. Carter G. Woodson African American Museum
- Terry Jones, Clearwater Urban Leadership Coalition
- Thelma Bruce, Private Citizen & President of NCNW St. Petersburg Metropolitan Section
- Tiffany Moore, Owner, Moore Eventful Event Hall
- Tim Dutton, Executive Director, Unite Pinellas
- Tony Macon, Owner, Esquire Barbershop
- Valerie Ellis, Citizen
- Veatrice Farrell, Private Citizen & Executive Director, Deuces Live
- Will Johnson, Owner, All Things Considered Photography

END