EQUITY AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS COMMITTEE

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In addition to the Mayor's ReOpen DC survey, the Committee received input through engagement with nine focus groups and interviews with more than 10 stakeholder groups. This engagement involved representatives from the African-American community, Asian and Pacific Islander community, Latinx community, African community, LGBTQ community, senior citizen community, blind and low vision community, mobility-impaired community, hearing impaired community, intellectual and developmental disabilities community, people experiencing homelessness and advocates, and nonprofit organizations that provide services to vulnerable populations.

SAFEGUARDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the report's primary guidance and universal safeguards (e.g., physical distancing of at least six feet, use of masks in public spaces, stringent sanitation and hygiene practices), the Committee proposes the following guidance listed below.

ACTIVITY	ADDITIONAL SAFEGUARDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Employment and income	Increase SNAP benefit eligibility to vulnerable populations not currently covered
	Increase investments and partnerships for connecting vulnerable populations to in-demand careers
	Increase small business support to assist vulnerable businesses to access COVID-19 assistance
	Provide unemployment insurance for job sharing workers with lost wages
	Incentivize employer accommodation of extended work-from-home and employee requests of delay returning to work due to COVID-19 related considerations
	Invest in legal aid and resources for the public in advance of increased requests for legal assistance regarding lost benefits
Education	Provide school supplies as well as food and clothing services for children in need
	Provide mobile Wi-Fi or floating locations in vulnerable communities, adjacent to open spaces, and outside public facilities such as libraries and community centers
	Develop an Extended Academic Program available and offered through schools and/or neighborhood community centers, integrating school supports such as learning opportunities and community partnerships to eliminate learning loss
	Work in tandem with DC Public Schools and area charter schools to address the digital divide, providing Wi-Fi, equipment, and tech literacy education for caregivers
	Stage distance learning in ways that minimize internet bandwidth challenges and facilitate device sharing in households
	Expand childcare opportunities and access for families of workers who must return to work

	Provide free tuition and stipends to residents without a college degree for non-profit state colleges and community colleges
	Enforce signage, sanitation, cleaning, testing, and distancing standards equitably in retail
Food environment	Continue to facilitate the expansion and reach of fresh food retailers and nonprofit food pantry, preparation, and delivery programs, especially 'East of the River'
	Expand delivery of farmer's market produce and urban garden capacity
	Support equitable payment options both in brick-and-mortar markets and online by adapting for unbanked populations and public benefit recipients and expanding the number of establishments that can accept WIC and SNAP payments
	Ensure that families that rely on free and reduced lunches and summer meal sites have safe access with proper physical distancing
Health and medical Care	Expand programming for medical literacy to help the public better navigate the medical system and access preventative medical care, including behavioral health care
	Target medical care and testing availability (including mobile testing), as well as tracing capabilities in underserved communities
	Implement and enforce equity practices in treatment and clinical trials through increased oversight and the development of a patient reporting system
	Work with pharmacies and other medical corporations to prevent treatment shortages in underserved areas
	Increase access to physical, mental, and psychological health resources for front-line workers and other individuals experiencing significant increases in stress and trauma. Resources should be made available 24/7, as typical 9am-5pm operating hours pose barriers to access for these services
	Regulate the price of essential items like sanitization supplies
	Make telehealth/telemedicine services accessible to all and ensure it is covered by insurance
Housing	Prevent displacement of vulnerable residents that are impacted by illness, economic turmoil, and job loss
	Sustain investments in the expansion of supportive housing and affordable housing for domestic violence victims, returning citizens, and homeless individuals (not shelter housing)
	Expand services to populations who are housing insecure due to poverty and histories of incarceration, especially rental assistance programs to pay down rent arrears and financial support to prevent more people from experiencing homelessness
	Protect tenants' rights, health and safety by prohibiting evictions and unsafe management by landlords
	Expand the use of hotel rooms for residents experiencing homelessness who have become infected or have been exposed to COVID-19 or have the highest prevalence of COVID-19 risk factors
	Provide a systemic evaluation of congregate living settings with regular testing
	Ensure that all residents have access to affordable heating and cooling options during the stay-at-home order by preventing utility shutoffs
Transportation	Reinstate free Circulator access and expand free bike share access

	Increase resources for expanded and safe transit operations, including hazard pay for vulnerable transit employees
	Improve safe access to DMV services and improve the ease of online and mail-in DMV services
	Encourage the use of PPE by riders on public and micro transit
Outdoor Environment and Recreation	Implement reopening protocols with a focus on accommodating people of all abilities
	Increase investments in 'East of the River' recreation amenities including fitness gyms, outdoor parks, and trails, etc., and implement physical distancing guides for safe use
	Ensure that people of all abilities and those with underlying conditions, or vulnerability due to age, are able to participate fully in recreational activities, and train recreational opportunity providers about barriers that exist with current programming so that they can be made more accessible
	Implement reopening protocols with a focus on accommodating people with disabilities
	Consider innovative ways to fight disparate environmental impacts on low income communities
Community Safety	Expand domestic violence prevention and services to respond to an anticipated surge in requests for service once the stay-at-home order is lifted
	Downgrade sentencing for lesser offenses to work release programs that require enrollment in workforce development initiatives and are attached to independent living and housing opportunities
	Eliminate long lines in public buildings and other facilities to reduce the chances of transmission and infection

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS AND 'BIG IDEAS'

The committee and its members have identified several additional initiatives and ideas for consideration, which include:

- **Invest in accelerated closure of the digital divide through initiatives including:**
  - o Providing free public Wi-Fi, devices and training for technical literacy
  - o Increasing mobile availability of information, with an emphasis on accessible technologies
  - o Incorporating universal accessibility in communications and devices, including instant translation, voice-activated communication, etc.
  - o Expand the use of mobile messaging and development of mobile applications to deliver government services
- **Restructure outreach strategy to vulnerable communities that do not traditionally engage with government through initiatives including:**
  - o Incentivizing individuals to opt-in to ongoing communications regarding COVID-19 (e.g., Metro Pass lottery)
  - o Expanding 211 to include a hotline and call center to field requests for real time updates
  - o Creating a universal application and outreach program for services and data sharing between agencies
  - o Engaging workers who must return to work through unions and employers

- o Launching a "know your rights" campaign that includes distinct branding and a website for vulnerable populations during COVID-19
- o Leveraging trusted government programs (such as MORCA and Project Empowerment) to inform justice-involved individuals and their families about health updates and rights
- **Ensure recovery efforts are grounded in data, particularly in identifying existing inequities and disparate outcomes, to providing a roadmap of understanding who the recovery is serving and how programs are developed and implemented equitably by:**
  - o Ensuring all data related to the Disease and resources is stored and made accessible
  - o Securing private sector participation to ensure a comprehensive understanding of economic equity data