



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Jumaane D. Williams

December 8, 2020

President-Elect Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Vice President-Elect Kamala D. Harris
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

RE: Federal Funding and Legislative Needs

Dear President-Elect Biden and Vice President-Elect Harris:

Please allow me to first congratulate you on your well-earned victory. Your election has raised the spirits of millions longing for leadership that embodies decency and reason. I look forward to your administration working with Congress, as well as state and local officials like myself, to create substantive reforms and systems of accountability together.

As you know, there are countless issues throughout our nation that are long overdue to be addressed, and I applaud you for focusing the policy efforts of your transition on COVID-19, economic recovery, racial justice, and climate change. In addition to these critical areas, I request that within your first 100 days (and beyond), efforts also be directed toward the following issues that greatly impact millions of New Yorkers:

1. 100% FEMA Match for Cities and States due to COVID-19 Related Expenditures
 - a. Authorize 100% FEMA match for states and cities, including New York City, due to response and recovery efforts as a result of COVID-19.
2. Improve Awareness of Public Engagement Opportunities in Agency Rulemaking
 - a. Create a national Office of the Public Advocate, with the mission of: a) requiring additional public awareness and engagement during agency rulemaking processes, and b) making recommendations to executive branch agencies on improving agency programming and spending, based, in part, on this public input.¹
3. Federal Stimulus
 - a. Take immediate legal action, as President-Elect, to block Treasury Secretary Mnuchin's transfer of \$455 billion in

¹ [Anti-Corruption and Public Integrity Act – Senator Elizabeth Warren \(senate.gov\)](#)



unspent CARES Act funds, and support the Heroes Act, which would provide states and cities with additional support. Approximately 50% of black-owned small businesses nationwide have closed, since March, 2020, due to COVID-19, according to the New York Federal Reserve;²

- b. Increase funds allocated to states, including New York State, to support Americans suffering unemployment due to COVID-19. Second, incentivize states in high-cost areas to increase weekly payment amounts; typical payments in these areas don't meet cost of living need;³

4. Health

- a. Fully utilize the Defense Production Act to ensure that all hospitals, health clinics, and nursing homes have at least a three month supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- b. Promote the partial replacement of N-95s with durable and sustainable reusable PPE for our frontline health care workers in city and state-level procurement initiatives.
- c. Establish a manufacturing PPE resiliency project, to determine ways that NYS and NYC-based manufacturing, linked with academic institutions for technical assistance, might encourage the manufacturing of N-95s, elastomeric respirators, PAPRs, and other PPE.
- d. Support repeal of the Hyde Amendment.
- e. Support and pass H.R. 6142 and S. 3424, the Black Maternal Health omnibus.

5. Infrastructure & Transportation

- a. Restore full funding to the Gateway Program to what was proposed in 2017 appropriations legislation (\$900 million).
- b. Allocate additional funds to New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority, in order to help it remain solvent through 2021.
- c. Streamline the process of allowing cities to implement congestion pricing without years-long delays.

6. Immigration

- a. Restore DACA operations and provide a pathway to citizenship.

² https://www.newyorkfed.org/newsevents/news/regional_outreach/2020/20200804

³

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/debunking-myths-about-covid-19-reliefs-unemployment-insurance-on-steroids/>



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- b. Increase U-Visas for domestic violence survivors and victims of crime.
- c. Rescind Safe Third Country agreements.

7. Housing

- a. Increase Section 8 voucher allowances.
- b. Provide emergency rental assistance and an extension of the federal eviction moratorium. Where viable, allow cities maximum authority to administer.
- c. Allocate maximum financial support for public housing across the country, including the New York City Housing Authority ("NYCHA"). In New York City, NYCHA developments have long-standing, needed repairs and renovations. Additionally, our team would like to tour several local developments with your HUD officials.
- d. Increase federal first home buyers grants, including low-income co-ops, from \$10,000 to \$15,000, and lower credit score requirements to 600.
- e. Preserve the National Housing Trust Fund (HTF), which the Senate recently termed "duplicative."
- f. Increase federal funding for the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program and the Continuum of Care (CoC) program.

8. Criminal Justice

- a. Optically, reframe the conversation from "policing reforms" to **redefining public safety**.
- b. Equitably legalize marijuana, ensuring that criminal records for recreational use or possession are expunged, and that communities most severely impacted by drug laws are prioritized for licensing and related federal funding.
- c. Support the examination and implementation of equitable reparations.
- d. Support repeal of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 ("Crime Bill"), including abolishing mandatory minimum sentencing. Sections related to Violence Against Women and the Assault Weapons ban should remain intact.
- e. Expand on the success of the Second Chance Pell Pilot Program, by reinstating Pell Grant funding to prisons nationwide. States will likely follow suit.
- f. Support H.R.7120, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020.



- g. Support legislation to prohibit law enforcement's use of chokeholds.
- h. Support legislation to prohibit law enforcement's use of "no knock raids".
- i. Formalize and incorporate recommendations made by President Obama's *21st Century Policing Task Force* including, but not limited to:
 - 1. Scientifically supported identification procedures;
 - 2. Reformed mass demonstration policies;
 - 3. Eliminate/ban quotas for "tickets for revenue";
 - 4. Establish National Register of Decertified Officers;
 - 5. Required officer identification and reason for stops;
 - 6. Prohibit profiling and discrimination, in particular, as it relates to LGBT and gender nonconforming populations.

9. Voting Rights

- a. Support and pass legislation strengthening the Voting Rights Act.⁴
- b. Support and pass H.R. 1 to modernize, simplify, and expand voting access for all Americans.

10. Environment

- a. Reverse regulatory rollbacks and restore federal protections, including the Clean Water Rule and the National Environmental Policy Act.
- b. Reverse the U.S. Department of Energy's not "inconsistent with the public interest" statutory test in approval of LNG export permits.
- c. Mandate all new federal vehicles purchased to be electric vehicles.
- d. Streamline federal approval processes to facilitate the development of new renewable energy projects.
- e. Grant more Bureau of Energy Management leases for offshore wind.
- f. Support and advance the framework of the Green New Deal.

11. Education

- a. Invest additional funds for Title 1 schools.
- b. Reimburse school districts for technology costs. For example, New York City Department of Education spent \$330 million on providing remote devices to all students.

⁴ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/house-approves-bill-to-strengthen-voting-rights-act/>



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- c. Incentivize cities and states to establish and fund 3-K and Pre-K programs, to improve educational outcomes particularly for under resourced communities.
- d. Ensure adequate federal funds so that every school in New York City (and across the country) hires at least one counselor.
- e. Reinstitute discipline guidelines, meant to reduce suspensions of students of color.⁵

12. Jobs

- a. Restore \$30 million in Learn to Work funds.
- b. Expand the \$1.4 million Restaurant Revitalization Program, which subsidizes the wages of workers in restaurants in immigrant neighborhoods. Provide additional funding to MWBEs across New York City.

I'd love my team to connect with yours on this list; we've also shared it with the Mayor's office and with our Congressional delegation. Certain items will require additional information, which we're happy to provide. Your team can follow up with First Deputy Public Advocate Nick E. Smith, at nsmith@advocate.nyc.gov.

I look forward to hearing back.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.D.W." or a similar variation.

Jumaane D. Williams
Public Advocate for the City of New York

cc:

Members of New York City's Congressional Delegation