

**Urging the Federal Government to Expediently Approve COVID-19 Funding**

For over two years, federal coronavirus relief funding has been critical in supporting efforts in Los Angeles County to combat the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. With the resources federal legislation has made available, our County, along with federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), hospitals, and community partners, has created an extensive testing network, supported a massive vaccination effort with large scale and mobile vaccination sites, distributed personal protective equipment (PPE) to our most vulnerable, and delivered lifesaving therapies and treatments to those with COVID-19. These funds have been essential, and they helped the County provide services to those most in-need, including low-income communities and communities of color.

On March 15, President Biden signed H.R. 2471, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022, into law. Although this delivered important funding for a wide array of government services, as well as federal resources to fund critical operations in Ukraine, it unfortunately did not contain additional funding to support

MOTION

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coronavirus relief efforts, and many essential programs are now at risk. That same day, the White House released a fact sheet detailing the consequences if Congress did not allocate additional COVID-19 funding. This includes an inability to secure further booster doses and variant-specific vaccines, providers no longer being able to seek reimbursement for testing, treatment, and vaccinations for the uninsured, scaling back essential treatments, and compromising the ability to detect future COVID-19 threats.

Unless federal support continues, Los Angeles County will be faced with the alarming loss of services for those who need it most, including our uninsured residents. Absent immediate Congressional action, on March 22 the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) COVID-19 Uninsured Program will no longer provide reimbursement for testing and treatment to clinics, hospitals, pharmacies, and other healthcare providers caring for uninsured residents. On April 5<sup>th</sup>, the program will also stop accepting vaccination claims due to funding. In Los Angeles County, it's estimated that between one-third to 40% of services in highly burdened communities are covered by this fund.

The impacts on the County could be devastating. Without this federal support, healthcare partners providing care to the County's most vulnerable residents will either be forced to absorb costs, turn people away, or withdraw from the significant network that the County has built for testing, vaccine administration, and treatment. By cutting off services to the providers helping those most vulnerable, this will only further exacerbate existing health disparities that have devastated low-income communities and communities of color throughout this pandemic.

This country has already suffered unimaginable loss from this pandemic. In Los

Angeles County alone, there have been over 2.6 million COVID-19 infections, and tragically nearly 32,000 residents have lost their lives to this virus. Nationwide, nearly 1 million have passed away, an unfathomable loss of life. As alarming early signals are occurring in Europe, with a new surge in cases likely driven by the BA.2 variant already underway, it's essential that the County and the nation be prepared for any new wave of cases during the pandemic. It is imperative that our partners in Congress and in the Biden Administration move with urgency to pass legislation with sufficient resources to continue our collective efforts to combat this virus, especially for those residents who are most at risk.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors instruct the Chief Executive Office (CEO) – Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch, in collaboration with the Department of Public Health and the Department of Health Services, to send a five-signature letter to President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, with a copy to the Senate and House Appropriations Committee Chairs and Ranking Members, and the Los Angeles County Congressional Delegation, urging them to work with urgency and expediency to pass additional COVID-19 relief funding legislation to continue funding critical COVID-19 efforts, and to assure the necessary ongoing funding for the extent of the emergency that maintains critical state and local relief efforts.

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