

BIG CITY MAYORS

September 21, 2021

Dear Governor Abbott, Lt. Gov. Patrick, and Speaker Phelan:

On behalf of our communities and the 8.5 million Texans we represent, thank you for considering the appropriation of state American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in a thorough and thoughtful manner during this third special legislative session. We look forward to engaging with the legislature and working with you to address the continuing needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic challenges faced by the state.

The pandemic caused an unprecedented level of disruption to virtually every aspect of our lives. Many businesses ground to a halt, impacting the wellbeing and livelihood of millions of Texans. Schools were forced to provide education online, forcing educators to adjust to an entirely new way of teaching at a moment's notice. Our healthcare system also faced challenges, which pushed the system beyond its limits.

Thankfully, we are now in a different phase of this pandemic. Our state has proven itself resilient and will come out of this stronger than before. However, the pandemic exposed clear areas for improvement to our infrastructure and public service provision, and with the third COVID-19 wave fueled by the Delta variant, there are still challenges on the horizon.

We respectfully request that you support dedicating state ARPA funds to these priorities identified collectively by our cities:

Housing and utilities assistance – The economic impacts of the pandemic are still being felt throughout our communities and individuals need support to maintain stable housing. Funding should be dedicated to continuing TDHCA's efforts to keep people housed and to keep water, electric and gas utilities from being disconnected.

Healthcare system – Local health districts, hospitals and healthcare providers have been at the forefront of the pandemic; the toll of eighteen months and the current surge requires continued investment in our healthcare system, including ongoing expenses incurred by emergency services. Funding should

continue to be appropriated for ongoing pandemic response expenses, such as testing, vaccinations, and urgent staffing needs at hospitals and alternative care sites.

Broadband development and accessibility – High-speed internet is an essential tool for both business and education. Dedicated funding should be set aside to improve availability and accessibility to unserved and underserved areas. This is an urgent issue, and maximum flexibility should be allowed to ensure that funding to address the problem doesn't sit idle while the FCC and State mapping is conducted.

Business support – Businesses, especially small and micro-businesses, are a key part of our cities' economies and have been hard hit by the pandemic. Funding support should be set aside for business development and small business assistance.

Early childhood education and childcare – Investing in early childhood education and childcare is critical to rebuilding a strong economy and is proven to yield generational and familial success. Funding priorities should include resources that bolster programs that increase access to high-quality and reliable programs.

Collaboration at all levels of government will help the State of Texas recover and move forward in a post-pandemic world. We appreciate your time and attention to these issues and look forward to working together with you and our state legislators.

Sincerely,



Mayor Sylvester Turner
City of Houston, Texas



Mayor Ron Nirenberg
City of San Antonio, Texas



Mayor Steve Adler
City of Austin, Texas



Mayor Mattie Parker
City of Fort Worth, Texas



Mayor Oscar Leeser
City of El Paso, Texas



Mayor Jim Ross
City of Arlington, Texas



Mayor Paulette Guajardo
City of Corpus Christi, Texas



Mayor John Muns
City of Plano, Texas



Mayor Pete Saenz
City of Laredo, Texas



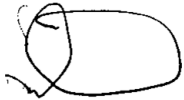
Mayor Rick Stopfer
City of Irving, Texas



Mayor Ginger Nelson
City of Amarillo, Texas



Mayor Ron Jensen
City of Grand Prairie, Texas



Mayor Joe Zimmerman
City of Sugar Land, Texas

Texas' Big City Mayors is a bipartisan coalition of mayors from Texas' most populous cities, representing over one third of the state's residents, that advocates for policies and initiatives that will strengthen our communities and improve the quality of life for all Texans.