



BALTIMORE CITY
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MEMORANDUM

To: The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council

c/o Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

From: Michael Braverman, Housing Commissioner

4/24/20

Date: April 23, 2020

**Re: City Council Resolution 20-0194R Informational Hearing - Baltimore's Strategic
Response to the Wuhan Coronavirus**

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Resolution 20-0194R for the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore City Health Department, the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management, the Baltimore Police Department, the Baltimore City Fire Department, and the Baltimore City Department of Finance to brief the City Council on Baltimore's strategic response to the Wuhan coronavirus.

At the request of City Council President Brandon Scott, City Council's Health Committee Chair, Kristerfer Burnett announced a new hearing date for City Council Resolution 20-0194R, a previously recessed hearing on COVID-19, to ask agencies to come prepared to speak about their ongoing COVID-19 efforts and answer specific questions about, outreach demographics, testing and tracing, access to food, digital learning and enforcement of COVID-19 regulations.

DHCD's first priorities are the safety of staff, customers and Baltimore communities. DHCD has made public an Action Plan for how agency services are being modified, detailing teleworking, social distancing, and other practices being enacted to maintain continuity of operations to the greatest degree possible while maintaining safe practices during this public health crisis. Please see attached Action Plan.

In response to the crisis, DHCD has worked closely with the Mayor's Office and other City agencies to provide access to food for those experiencing food insecurity in Baltimore, particularly in heavily impacted areas, seven days a week. DHCD's Research & Analytics Team has been working in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Performance and Innovation to develop mapping and analysis of food site locations. DHCD activated what is normally the Summer Meals Program on March 17 and distributes an average of over 25,000 meals per day to 42 sites including City Recreation Centers. DHCD, led by the Homeownership and Housing Preservation Division leadership and staff, immediately sprang into action, launching the program, revising protocols to maintain distancing and safe practices, demonstrating innovation and resourcefulness to maintain necessary supplies and resources, including drawing on other DHCD teams for personnel support. As of April 20, more than 825,000 meals had been provided, a figure that will climb into the millions.

DHCD has modified its service delivery to abide by and enforce COVID-19 regulations. In-person permit applications, licensing, & registration have been suspended, however those services remain available online and expiring licenses & permits have been automatically extended for 30 days after conclusion of Maryland's State of Emergency. DHCD Housing Inspectors focus on emergency community service response and inspections for Critical 311 Service Requests. Construction & Trade Inspections are taking measures such as utilizing real-time onsite video inspections to ensure that themselves and customers remain safe while still fulfilling the necessary role of ensuring safe building practices in the City. Housing Inspectors are playing a role of active vigilance in identifying situations where emergency orders, such as social distancing and face covering requirements, are being violated. In these cases, inspectors can advise citizens and inform the Police.

Nearly all DHCD functions, including homeownership supports and incentives; emergency community services; neighborhood community development, land transactions and project finance; litigation (subject to court closures) and enforcement; local and federal grants processes are still operational -though modified to minimize in person contact. A few services, such as non-emergency demolition and in-person casework, have been suspended. Please see page 3 of attached Action Plan for Service Level Summary.

DHCD **has no objection** to the passage of Council Resolution 20-0194R and recommends that the Resolution be passed by the City Council

MB:sm

cc: Mr. Blendy, Nicholas, *Mayor's Office of Government Relations*