

July 14, 2020

Dear Tulare County Board of Supervisors and CAO,

Tulare County residents are experiencing dire economic and public health impacts due to the global pandemic. In partnership with community residents, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability calls on the Board to direct funding from nearly \$49 million dollars they are set to receive from the CARES act on urgent community and public health investments. We commend the Board for allocating funding toward rental, utility and food bank assistance for each district. We urge the Board to consider the following recommendations in regards to these allocations as well as direct dollars to other community needs.

- **Increase community investment to \$20 million dollars:** Due to the significant amount of assistance needed in the County, community investment dollars should be increased from \$14 million to \$20 million dollars.
- **Rental assistance:** At least \$5 million dollars should be allocated for rental assistance. All Tulare County residents regardless of documentation status should be eligible for this assistance.
- **Mortgage assistance:** Increase community investment dollars to include mortgage assistance to all Tulare County residents regardless of documentation status.
- **Mobile testing:** Use contingency funds (approximately \$5 million) for COVID-19 Mobile Testing in unincorporated communities to address the impact that COVID-19 is having on Latinx/Black populations.
- **Increased broadband access:** Allocate dollars for increased broadband access and infrastructure in unincorporated communities where there are gaps in access to COVID-19 information, school resources, and local updates.
- **PPE for essential workers:** Increase access to PPE for essential workers, volunteers, and vulnerable populations in unincorporated communities including farmworkers, food distribution volunteers, and elderly and homeless populations.
- **Small Business Support:** Employ culturally competent outreach to Black, Indigenous and People of Color owned small businesses to ensure that grants are accessible to business owners regardless of language, race, location, etc. (?). In addition, non-profit organizations in Tulare County must be eligible for these grants.
- **Educational and public health outreach and resources:** Allocate funding to public health education and resources in unincorporated communities, emergency shelters and cooling centers for homeless populations.
- **Local Chamber of Commerce Educational Support:** Educational support and outreach should be tasked to the Environmental Health Division of HHS or under the Public Health Officer. This task should include enforcement of all state and local public health orders.

While the following is not an exhaustive list, we urge the Board and County staff to meet with community residents, CBOs, and essential workers to collect additional feedback and direction on how to allocate these funds. The proposed funding to emergency rental, utility and food bank assistance can help address some of the disproportionate impacts COVID-19 is having on low-income people of color, however, we ask the Board to increase funding to the resources detailed above.

Thank you,
Blanca Escobedo
Policy Advocate
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability