From: Mayor Bryan K. Barnett
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USCM President's Report on COVID-19, Racial Justice and Other Actions

TO: The Mayor

FROM: Bryan K. Barnett, Mayor of Rochester Hills, MI

When George Floyd called for his mama, "all mamas began to wail."
-- Rev. Dr. Mary White at The Fountain of Praise Church, Houston, TX

Mayors,

Today, millions watched George Floyd's funeral. As we continue to ask questions and seek answers, we heard inspirational words, as our nation celebrated his life and mourned his loss. His death has sparked conversation and unrest not seen in 50 years -- and I'm convinced it will be a catalyst for systemic change.

Last Wednesday, I convened USCM's Executive Committee to name a working group on police reform and racial justice. Led by mayors Lightfoot, Castor and Cranley alongside police chiefs from Baltimore, Phoenix and Columbia, SC, this team will offer recommendations to help end the injustices facing black Americans and any other groups experiencing injustice based on their race. Their first formal meeting takes place today. We applaud them for accepting this charge and, in advance, for their collective work, insights and ideas.

We again lift up those who are demonstrating peacefully in your cities and for law enforcement that protects them and marches alongside.

It was Darnella Frazier, a 17-year-old who took the video of George Floyd being suffocated. "Everyone's asking me 'how do I feel?'" to which she responded, "I don't know how to feel."

While many have criticized her for not intervening, it is to her we owe a revolution that has changed world history. A 17-year old, fearless enough to keep her camera rolling despite what she was witnessing, despite the intense glares she received and the attempts of an officer to block her view.

"We thank you for the life of George Floyd, oh God. That at a moment he called out for his mama, we believe that the ears of mamas across this nation reared up…. We began to wail for our children.
We began to wail for our grandchildren.
We wail for men across this world because of one mama's call."
-- Rev. Dr. Mary White during Mr. Floyd's service

Mayors, we are leading at a time of crisis. I pray for your work and for the safety and well-being of your residents. I pray, especially, for all of the good to come from this national tragedy.

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With that, and with much work ahead, let me offer a list of COVID-19 and other topics and opportunities covered in this Tuesday's message. Corresponding details follow.

1. NEW: USCM Working Group on Police Reform and Racial Justice
2. AVAILABLE: 67 Proposed Resolutions/Virtual Standing Committees, Executive Committee and Plenary Schedules
3. DEADLINE: 2020 USCM Nominating Committee Letters - June 17 (Wednesday) at 5:00pm ET
4. REGISTER NOW: COVID-19: Disparities to Treatment and Care Webinar - June 11 (Thursday) at 11:00am ET
5. REGISTER NOW: Water and Wastewater Management During the COVID-19 Pandemic Webinar - June 12 (Friday) at 1:00pm ET
6. SAVE THE DATE: All Mayors/Business Council Call - June 12 (Friday) at 3:00pm ET
7. NEW: Local Head Start Programs Awarded $750 Million from The CARES Act
8. NEEDED: Additional Data for USCM Fiscal Pain Tracker
9. NEEDED: 50 State-Wide Letters from Mayors Calling for Fiscal Assistance
10. Connecting with USCM and Exchanging Information with Fellow Mayors

1. NEW: USCM Working Group on Police Reform and Racial Justice
Recent events have highlighted the continued shortcomings in some of our police departments in their policies and practices and the way they relate to the communities they serve and protect. Revealed again are serious social issues that must be addressed - issues of race, class, prejudice, poverty, and inequality in our country. We know full well that effective community policing is practiced in a constitutional manner by many departments, and that the vast majority of police officers have developed trusting relationships with the communities they serve. But problems exist and they must be addressed.

In the fall of 2014, after the events that began in Ferguson with the death of

Michael Brown, the Conference's President at the time, Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson, appointed a working group of mayors and police chiefs to develop recommendations to strengthen police-community relations in cities. Their report was adopted by the Conference as policy (link), and most of its recommendations were incorporated into the report of President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (link). That process was a good one and provides a model for us to follow. And the report we produced at that time, along with the President's Task Force report, provide a good starting point.

During an Executive Committee meeting I convened last Wednesday, I announced that I have established a new Working Group on Police Reform and Racial Justice, composed of three mayors and three current police chiefs. I have asked three great mayors, all of whom bring considerable knowledge and experience to this task, to help lead this effort:

- Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, Chair of the USCM Criminal and Social Justice Committee;
- Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley, Chair of the USCM Task Force of Mayors and Police Chiefs; and
- Tampa Mayor Jane Castor, a 31-year veteran of the Tampa Police Department who in 2009 became the first woman to be Tampa's Police Chief, a position she held for six years.

Serving with them are three thoughtful and experienced police chiefs:

- Michael Harrison of Baltimore;
- W. H. "Skip" Holbrook of Columbia, SC; and
- Jeri Williams of Phoenix.

Working with this group of 3 mayors and 3 chiefs will be:

- Chuck Ramsey, an advisor to the Conference of Mayors, and who served as police chief in Washington, DC and Philadelphia. He also co-chaired President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing;
- Ron Davis, former Director of the COPS Office - who served as Executive Director of the President's Task Force; and
- Our CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran and USCM staff.

I am asking this group to do four things:

1. Review the recommendations of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing and those contained in the USCM report Strengthening Police-Community Relations in America's Cities (A Report of The U.S. Conference of Mayors Working Group of Mayors and Police Chiefs in 2015);
2. Update, add to or subtract from them;
3. Produce a new set of recommendations for actions that respond to the current crisis and that can be implemented in our cities right away; and
4. Report back to the Executive Committee regarding their updated recommendations as soon as possible

The three mayors joined us on our all-mayors call last Friday to discuss the issues they will be considering. We announced the formation of the Working Group to the media yesterday and it elicited quick press attention in The Washington Post and other outlets. The Working Group is holding its first meeting late this afternoon.

2. AVAILABLE: 67 Proposed Resolutions/Virtual Standing Committees, Executive Committee and Plenary Schedules

Sixty-seven proposed resolutions were submitted by full Member Mayors by the deadline of Wednesday, May 27. Many of the resolutions relate to the public health and economic impacts of COVID-19, as requested when we issued the call for resolutions. The resolutions were assigned to the appropriate standing committee(s) by Membership Committee Chair Piscataway Mayor Brian C. Wahler and our General Council. You can now see all the resolutions - and the schedule for the standing committee meetings during the week of June 22 - here.

The USCM Constitution empowers the Executive Committee to adopt resolutions when the body is not gathered for an Annual Meeting. Thus, on Tuesday, June 30 at 1:00 pm ET, I will lead a virtual meeting of the USCM Executive Committee (Business Session) to both consider all resolutions approved by the standing committees, and consider the report of the USCM Nominating Committee.

Then, on Wednesday, July 1 at noon ET, we will have a virtual plenary session. First, there will be a video presentation, and I will make an address reporting on my year as our 77th President. Second, there will be a video presentation, and

then Mayor Fischer will make an address outlining his priorities for his year as our 78th President.

3. DEADLINE: 2020 USCM Nominating Committee Letters - June 17 (Wednesday) at 5:00pm ET

I want to remind full Member Mayors that I have appointed the USCM Nominating Committee for 2020. Full Member Mayors who are interested in seeking elected office within our organization should review this memo sent out by Tom Cochran. Please note, the deadline to submit a letter seeking office is Wednesday, June 17 at 5:00pm ET.

4. REGISTER NOW: COVID-19: Disparities to Treatment and Care Webinar - June 11 (Thursday) at 11:00am ET

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought increased focus to longstanding health-related and other disparities, and in cities across the nation there remain widespread reports of higher rates of COVID-19 hospitalizations, deaths, and positive cases based on race and ethnicity. These disparities expose long standing socio-economic, environmental, and other factors. Yet mayors remain at the forefront of combating inequalities to ensure the best outcomes for all residents.

Please join us this Thursday, June 11 from 11:00am to noon ET for this important webinar as we will highlight several targeted initiatives mayors are leading in their cities to advance equity and improve health outcomes for vulnerable residents. Additionally, the webinar will provide strategies, policies, and sound advice you can implement now to advance equity in the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and future public health emergencies.

Featured panelists will include:

- Richmond (VA) Mayor Levar Stoney, Chair of our Children, Health, and Human Services Standing Committee (Moderator);
- Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza;
- Fremont Mayor Lily Mei; and
- Former Boston City Health Commissioner John Auerbach.

Click here to register for this webinar.

5. REGISTER NOW: Water and Wastewater Management During the COVID-19 Pandemic Webinar - June 12 (Friday) at 1:00pm ET

The COVID-19 pandemic puts mayors and their water utilities at the front line of public health protection and community stability.

The United States Conference of Mayors Water Council will convene this Friday, June 12 from 1:00pm - 2:30pm ET in a session moderated by Napa Mayor Jill Techel and Lima Mayor David Berger, Co-Chairs of the Mayors Water Council.

The session will provide mayors with an opportunity to discuss how the pandemic is impacting local utility operations and budgets. Speakers have been asked to share their experiences about changing service levels, workforce and fiscal impacts.

Speakers will include representatives from the water advisory group who bring the practical experience of managing multiple facilities in the U.S. and abroad. In addition, Mayor Berger will lead a discussion on progress in implementing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Integrated Planning for Municipal Stormwater and Wastewater and pending new actions on compliance Affordability assessments - changes that the EPA is considering.

Our featured speaker will be Ms. Jamie Piziali, EPA's newly appointed Municipal Ombudsman - who will be the Agency's point person for mayors and city staff dealing with water and sewer utilities.

Click here to register for this webinar.

6. SAVE THE DATE: All Mayors Update - June 12 (this Friday) at 3:00pm ET

The agenda and registration will be sent out soon for our weekly Friday 3:00pm to 4:00pm ET call.

As discussed in item #1, our All Mayors/Business Council call last Friday focused on our new Working Group on Police Reform and Racial Justice. We were joined on that call by the three mayoral leaders of the working group, as well as former Chief Charles Ramsey.

We also heard from St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter as to the community response in his city, and from Houston Mayor and USCM Trustee Sylveter Turner. Mayor Turner asked that mayors assist his effort to support George Floyd and his family and show solidarity for good policing by lighting up city halls with crimson and gold - the colors of George Floyd's Alma mater Jack Yates High School in Houston. Tom Cochran sent a memo to all mayors in support of this effort on June 6, and cities across the country joined in this show of unity, with New York City, Los Angeles, El Paso, San Antonio, Tampa, Scranton, Oklahoma City, Columbia, SC, Philadelphia, East Hartford, East Point, San Marcos and countless other cities lighting notable landmarks as a unified symbol of support for George Floyd's loved ones and safer policing.

7. NEW: Local Head Start Programs Awarded $750 Million from The CARES Act

On Thursday, June 4, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF) announced the awarding of $750 million to Head Start and Early Head Start Programs. The funding will support the growth and development of children and families who have experienced a disruption of services during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Also, funding will be made available to assist supplemental summer Head Start programs. Last week, ACF began awarding these funds directly to all 1,600 local Head Start and Early Head Start programs in every state.

For more information and to learn more about Head Start programming specific to the current public health crisis, please visit the Office of Head Start website. A locator for all Head Start and Early Head Start programs can also be found here.

8. NEEDED: Additional Data for USCM Fiscal Pain Tracker

170 cities have responded to our Mayors COVID-19 Fiscal Pain Tracker - a way for mayors to share public information regarding budget shortfalls and related furloughs, layoffs, or other actions that have resulted from COVID-19. If you have not already submitted information, or have updates to content already submitted, please send them to fiscalpain@usmayors.org. This is a living, breathing USCM initiative that will be key to our success in building support in the Senate for emergency fiscal assistance.

9. NEEDED: 50 Statewide Letters from Mayors Calling for Fiscal Assistance

A number of mayors have already organized state-wide efforts calling for emergency fiscal assistance:

- Texas mayors, organized by Arlington Mayor Jeff Williams, sent this letter on April 15.
- Eleven Illinois mayors of cities with a population between 75,000 and 500,000, organized by Rockford Mayor Thomas McNamara, sent a letter April 20 to the State's delegation urging them to support, “flexible direct funding to municipalities to help limit the crippling economic damage to our cities as a result of this global pandemic.”
- Seven Iowa Mayors co-authored on May 6 this op-ed, “Congress: stand up for cities,” that appeared in the *Quad-City Times.*
- Pennsylvania mayors, organized by Scranton Mayor Paige Cognetti, sent this letter on May 13.
- Forty Michigan mayors signed on to a letter of support for direct local assistance for all cities that I distributed. The May 28 letter urges our Michigan Congressional delegation in Washington to help us.
- And, there could be other letters or efforts out there.

I strongly encourage all mayors to act - statewide. 50 letters or op-eds from mayors in all 50 states! Imagine what impact that would have as we push to get the Senate to act on fiscal assistance.

10. Connecting with USCM and Exchanging Information with Fellow Mayors

As a reminder, we have placed numerous resources and key federal links on our special COVID-19 webpage on the usmayors.org site, and we’ve created a Slack Channel where cities can exchange information. We encourage you to join the conversation on Slack if you haven’t already done so. In addition, please feel free to reach out to me directly at 248-227-2869 (cell) or barnettb@rochesterhills.org on any matter on which I personally or USCM as an organization can be of assistance. And you can always reach our CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran at 202-744-9110 (cell) or tcochran@usmayors.org.

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During the last three months in Rochester Hills, we placed inspirational messages along our trails and in our parks. Park attendance has been up 300% and those spaces continue to provide a much needed outlet.

One of my favorite quotes chosen for the signs is: “Everything is Going to be Alright.” This saying also graces the front of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Detroit.

Apart from receiving a number of compliments on our signs -- and the ultimate compliment in residents taking the signs from our trails and placing them in their own yards -- was an online debate about whether “alright” should be spelled “alright” or “all right.”

Who would have thought?

That debate continues, but the sentiment and importance of this message remains, no matter its spelling.

It will prevail, in time, for all of us.

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This final appeal never gets old for me. If you're not a member of The U.S. Conference of Mayors, **please join us!** There's never been a better time to be a part of this group. Questions? My contact information is above. Luther Roberts, Director of Membership at USCM, can also help. He can be reached at lroberts@usmayors.org.

Mayors, lead boldly -- and know that our USCM family is behind every one of you. Now more than ever.

BKB

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