Muriel Bowser
MAYOR

REQUEST FOR PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION
GOVERNOR'S REQUEST COVER LETTER
MAJOR DISASTER OR EMERGENCY

March 27, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Through: Regional Administrator MaryAnn Tierney
FEMA Region III
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), as implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36, I request that you declare an expedited Major Disaster Declaration for the District of Columbia as a result of the impacts of novel coronavirus disease ("COVID-19"). United States Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar II declared a public health emergency for the United States on January 31, 2020 pursuant to section 319 of the Public Health Service Act. You declared a National Emergency on March 13, 2020 pursuant to section 501 (b) of the Stafford Act.

I certify that I have taken the appropriate emergency response actions pursuant to my authority as Mayor as granted to me by the laws of the District of Columbia. On March 11, 2020, I declared a Public Emergency in response to several presumptive and confirmed cases of COVID-19, all District agencies were directed to take any and all actions necessary to respond and mitigate the threat posed by COVID-19, and I authorized the activation of the District's Emergency Operations Center.[1] These actions satisfy the prerequisite steps an affected State must take prior to requesting major disaster assistance in accordance with 42 U.S.C. § 5170.

[1] District of Columbia Mayor's Order 2020-045 (March 11, 2020).

$53.15 million was added to the District's budget to help with the response to COVID-19. This action was necessary to address the response to COVID-19. The Metropolitan Police Department and the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department are prepared to activate their emergency scheduling. In accordance with the District's emergency response plan, other District agencies, including the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Health, and the Department of Disability Services, are all coordinating resources to respond to COVID-19. The District of Columbia continues to work with surrounding jurisdictions in FEMA Region III to coordinate response and recovery operations.

I am requesting you authorize the following programs under the Individual Assistance Program:

Disaster Unemployment

Due to the closure of all non-essential businesses, and the reduction in some areas such as restaurant services, the number of unemployed District residents has risen substantially. A significant number of impacted employees will not qualify for traditional Unemployment Insurance benefits. For this reason, I request that FEMA make the Disaster Unemployment Assistance program available.

Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program

The impacts from COVID-19 are having a negative effect on the mental health of many across the District of Columbia. Between lost jobs, loved ones with illness, and having to make significant lifestyle changes, District residents of all ages need counseling services. For many residents who receive spiritual care within their house of worship, they have been unable to gather there due to restrictions on crowds. In accordance with the social distancing recommendations, counseling services are not being handled face to face; however, other remote options could be made more robust with federal assistance.

Other Needs Assistance

Some portions of the Individuals and Households Program (IHP) Other Needs Assistance (ONA) program would help to fill gaps in currently existing programs for disaster-related childcare, medical, dental, and funeral expenses. The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths are climbing, and it is expected we will see this trend continue over the coming weeks.

Public Assistance

Additionally, I request you authorize Public Assistance, Category A, Debris Removal, to respond to the potential for medical waste and related debris. I am also requesting that you authorize Public Assistance Category B, Emergency Protective Measures, to continue to respond to the immediate threat to lives, public health, safety, and the environment, as well as control the spread of COVID-19. The state agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the United States for any claims arising from event impacts, pursuant to Sections 403 of the Stafford Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5170b and 5151, for the duration of this event.

As of today, 267 District residents have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus, resulting in 4 deaths statewide. The number of positive cases is expected to rise as more testing becomes available.

The emergence of COVID-19 in the District and the resources required to effectively slow—and hopefully contain—the spread of this infectious illness is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the District. I am writing to ask for direct federal emergency assistance pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 5192 to protect the lives and property of the residents of the District of Columbia. As outlined above, the District has deployed all available resources, but the threat posed by COVID-19 and the extreme measures required to address this threat requires further federal support.

Pursuant to the Stafford Act, the District will agree to cover the non-federal cost associated with this request for assistance. I have designated Dr. Christopher Rodriguez, Director of the District of Columbia's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, as the District's authorized representative.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Muriel Bowser
Mayor

Enclosures

FEMA Form 010-0-13
Mayor's Order 2020-045