ENROLLED ORIGINAL

A RESOLUTION

23-382

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

March 17, 2020

To declare the existence of an emergency with respect to the need to provide authority to the Executive and to address critical needs of District residents and businesses during the current public health emergency including wage replacement, business relief, and additional authorities and exemptions regarding health, public safety, and consumer protection.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "COVID-19 Response Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2020".

Sec. 2. (a) There is reasonable cause to believe that there is an imminent hazard or actual occurrence of widespread exposure to coronavirus ("COVID-19") that poses a significant risk to a large number of people and threatens to overburden the healthcare system in the District of Columbia.

(b) COVID-19 has been detected in numerous states, with thousands of confirmed cases and a growing number of fatalities in the United States. On January 31, 2020, the United States Department of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency for the United States to aid the nation's healthcare community in responding to COVID-19. The World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have declared COVID-19 to be a "public health emergency of international concern." On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

(d) On March 11, 2020, the Mayor of the District of Columbia issued Mayor's Order 2020-045 and 2020-046, declaring a public emergency and a public health emergency in the District due to the imminent threat to the health, safety, and welfare of District residents posed by the spread of COVID-19.

(e) As businesses close or reduce operations to prevent the spread of COVID-19, there is an immediate need to provide wage relief for affected employees through the extension of unemployment benefits.

(f) Reduced travel and tourism during this public health emergency will adversely impact the operation of hotels in the District, creating a need to defer the remittance of real property tax.

(g) Due to the impact of closures and reduced operations, it is necessary to provide businesses in the District relief through deferring the remittance of sales tax and the creation of a small business grant program.

(h) To aid the Mayor in addressing the critical needs of District residents during this emergency, there is an immediate need to expand the Mayor's authority under the District of Columbia Public Emergency Act of 1980 and extend emergency authority to the Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking.

(i) Public benefits such as the Healthcare Alliance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (known as, TANF) and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (known as, SNAP) are crucial supports for the health and well-being of many District residents, creating an immediate need to allow the Mayor to extend the expiration of assistance under these programs until after the expiration this public health emergency.

(j) To protect consumers and the general public during this public health emergency, it is crucial to prohibit price gouging and the hoarding of supplies.

(k) District tenants who are impacted by decreased work hours or temporary layoffs in the coming days or weeks may have their earnings greatly reduced, making it imperative to prohibit utility shutoffs or evictions during this public health emergency.

(l) District agencies are operating at reduced capacity due to the public health emergency, creating a need to allow the Mayor to waive deadlines for licenses, registrations, or certifications for businesses and residents.

(m) To ensure that District residents have an adequate supply of medication to treat medical conditions, it is necessary to allow licensed pharmacists to dispense a refill of a medication prior to the expiration of a waiting period between refills.

(n) Homeless individuals in the District are particularly vulnerable to viruses like COVID-19, necessitating amendments to the Homeless Services Reform Act of 2005 (D.C. Official Code § 4-751.01 *et seq.*).

(o) To protect the health of District tenants and ensure that they are able to exercise their full rights under the Rental Housing Conversion and Sale Act of 1980 (D.C. Official Code § 42-3401.01 *et seq.*), and the Rental Housing Act of 1985 (D.C. Official Code § 42-3501.01 *et seq.*), during this public health emergency, deadlines for tenants and tenant associations under these laws need to be extended to 30 days after the emergency has transpired.

(o) As District schools implement distance learning to protect the health and well-being of students, parents and staff during this public health emergency, it is necessary to amend truancy reporting procedures to allow for absences to be marked as excused if the parent or student can show that they did not have access to equipment or software necessary to engage in distance learning.

(p) Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and other District boards and commissions have an immediate need to authorize the suspension of meetings or convene remote meetings during this public health emergency to prevent large gatherings that could facilitate the transmission of COVID-19.

(q) It is also necessary to allow flexibility to delay transmission of the fiscal year 2021 budget currently scheduled for March 19, 2020. The Council also requires changes to its rules to enable flexibility to conduct legislative business during the emergency.

Sec. 3. The Council of the District of Columbia determines that the circumstances in section 2 constitute emergency circumstances making it necessary that the COVID-19 Response Emergency Amendment Act of 2020 be adopted after a single reading.

Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.