



CITY OF

PORTLAND, OREGON

Ted Wheeler, Mayor
Amanda Fritz, Commissioner
Jo Ann Hardesty, Commissioner
Chloe Eudaly, Commissioner

Elizabeth Edwards, Director
Office of Government Relations

City of Portland COVID-19 Intergovernmental Legislative Agenda

The City of Portland is committed to centering racial equity in our collective responses to COVID-19. Recognizing that Black, Indigenous and People of Color, people with disabilities, undocumented Portlanders, people experiencing houselessness, and people experiencing poverty and housing insecurity are often disproportionately affected, the City of Portland is committed to ensuring this crisis does not exacerbate existing inequities. We also acknowledge that the Asian and Pacific Islander community has been particularly impacted by increased racism and xenophobia since this crisis began. This framework informs the development of legislative priorities to stem the spread of the virus, support households, and bolster local businesses throughout this evolving crisis. The City of Portland is committed to advocating for the following legislative priorities in response to the COVID-19 emergency.

Protect Public Health & Prioritize Vulnerable Populations

The City of Portland, in partnership with Multnomah County as the public health lead and many cities and other local governments statewide, is advocating for crucial resources, policies and practices to protect public health and prioritize vulnerable populations, including:

- COVID-19 testing that is free and widely available;
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for frontline workers, including healthcare professionals and first responders;
- Public wash stations and hygiene supplies for people experiencing houselessness;
- Shelter space to facilitate best practices for social distancing and protecting most vulnerable persons, including funding through Emergency Shelter Grants, Community Development Block Grants, and the State Homeless Assistance Program;
- Resources to limit the “crisis within a crisis,” including treatment support for mental health, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, and increased substance abuse during physical distancing;
- Limiting legal liability related to COVID-19 response work to ensure rapid deployment of resources and support systems; and
- Collection and publication of data for COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths that is disaggregated by race.

Stabilize Housing and Ensure Essential Needs are Met

Keeping families and individuals housed with food, water, heat and power through the instability of the COVID-19 emergency is paramount to the well-being and future recovery of Portlanders. In addition, ensuring internet and computer access for people and families, especially those who currently lack it, is more important than ever. The City of Portland is advocating for:

- Moratoria on residential evictions and foreclosures due to COVID-19 impacts, and forgiveness of payments for people whose income or expenses have been substantially impacted by COVID-19;
- Rent and mortgage assistance, support for landlords unable to provide housing services without rent, and other tools structured to allow for payment of outstanding rent and mortgage balances related to COVID-19 that help keep people housed, or quickly rehoused, including funding through the Emergency Housing Account and the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program;
- Funding to combat food instability through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and support for local food pantries and food delivery to the elderly and other vulnerable or potentially isolated communities;
- Expansion of social safety net programs to stabilize low-wage, displaced and unemployed workers, including Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Social Security Disability Insurance;
- Assistance to ensure all essential utility services (water, wastewater, internet, electric, gas, and garbage) remain affordable and accessible and that utilities are supported in their ability to deliver essential services and maintain critical infrastructure, including through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the state revolving funds for drinking water and clean water services;
- Access to computers and affordable, reliable internet service, regardless of location or income of recipient, to address the digital divide; and
- Civil legal aid services and social services specifically designed to help households navigate post-COVID-19 issues including credit reporting, collections, foreclosures and counseling and ensuring services are accessible in multiple languages.

Stabilize the Economy and Expedite Equitable Recovery

The far-reaching negative impacts on local and global economies from the COVID-19 pandemic are significantly impacting Portland households and businesses, alike. The City of Portland is advocating for resources and policies to stabilize the economy and promote an equitable recovery for workers, small business, major employers, and non-profit organizations.

Portlanders—especially low-wage workers, undocumented workers, Black, Indigenous and People of Color, and people with disabilities—are faced with immediate and drastic changes to the job market, including mass layoffs and increased exposure to disease. The City of Portland is advocating for increased protections and support for **workers**, that consider immediate to long-term policy interventions, including:

- Paid leave to care for themselves or family members as a result of COVID-19 and attendant impacts;

- Robust, flexible, and accessible unemployment insurance that supports a wide array of workers, including sole practitioners, contractors and people employed in the gig economy;
- Increased state and federal funding for job training, guided by current unemployment data and anticipated trends, to help individuals retrain and connect to the employment opportunities;
- Establishing a paid jobs program employing impacted youth and adults to support disaster relief efforts;
- Temporary financial support for Oregonians that cannot access federal benefits due to their immigration status, involvement in the criminal justice system, or otherwise; and
- Direct financial assistance for childcare for working guardians, low-income workers, and frontline essential workers with children displaced during school closures.

Portland **businesses and non-profits** are struggling to survive and adapt during this protracted emergency. Businesses owned by Black, Indigenous, Asian and Pacific Islander and People of Color are particularly vulnerable to the severe disruption in the economy. The City is advocating for immediate and sustainable long-term business and community organization support through:

- Moratoria on commercial evictions and foreclosures due to COVID-19 impacts; lease and commercial loan assistance or forgiveness and other tools to avoid evictions for impacted organizations or loss of property for local commercial property owners, with associated funding to support landlords unable to provide services for commercial spaces without rent;
- Direct funding to local programs (like the Portland Small Business Relief Fund) and organizations that support small businesses, with a focus on quick dispersal of support to vulnerable businesses and culturally specific organizations that can address barriers in access;
- Funding for small businesses otherwise hindered from accessing traditional federal funding streams (e.g. businesses in the cannabis industry, and businesses owned by undocumented immigrants);
- Increased access to capital and contracting opportunities for small businesses owned by Black, Indigenous, Asian and Pacific Islander and People of Color;
- Fast-tracked state and federal funding to priority city capital infrastructure projects and tailored support for severely impacted industries (e.g., transportation, travel and hospitality, and creative arts); and
- Increase resources to community and arts organizations that support vulnerable and impacted communities and businesses through technical and financial support, language translation services for outreach, and matching local dollars to non-profit service providers.

Protect Local Decision-making and Resources

Local authority is critical to the City of Portland’s ability to nimbly and effectively respond to the on-the-ground impacts of COVID-19 to city operations and within the Portland community. The City of Portland will actively seek legislation to enable more flexibility during this declared emergency and, conversely, will oppose efforts to curtail its authority to develop and enforce local ordinances and voter-approved measures, manage its bureaus and their functions, and maintain and raise revenue consistent with the principles and values in this Agenda.