

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 3, 2020

TO: Hon. Chris Sununu, Governor

CC: Hon. Jerry Little, Executive Director, GOFERR

**Hon. Chuck Morse, Chair, GOFERR, Legislative Advisory Board
Hon. Donnalee Lozeau, Chair, GOFERR Stakeholder Advisory Board
Hon. Stephen Shurtleff, Speaker of the House
Hon. Donna Soucy, President of the Senate
Hon. Paul C. Smith, House Clerk
Hon. Tammy L. Wright, Senate Clerk
Michael York, State Librarian**

**FROM: Deogratias Mwano, A small Business owner
Community Leader**

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Recommendations from some black, brown and new immigrant small business owners and community leaders in New Hampshire in support of New Hampshire's minority businesses and organization surviving the negative impact of COVID-19.

Dear Governor Sununu,

We live in a transformative time, where the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19 and racial injustice have led to unprecedented responses. It's a time when leadership and empathy go hand in hand to place us on a path to recovery. Thank you, Governor Sununu, for your leadership and consideration for all people and communities.

Nevertheless, the deployment of state resources has fallen short. Black, brown and new immigrant communities are not benefiting from the COVID-19 resources the state and federal governments have provided thus far. Major gaps exist in the dissemination of information these communities need to understand the grant process and their ability to navigate the pre-qualification requirements to meet deadlines. An example of these gaps happened recently when the SBA put on webinars for minority-owned businesses two and a half months after they introduced the PPP and EIDL programs. The minority business community saw this as an afterthought. These gaps and the resulting damage harm the potential for success of New Hampshire's black, brown and new immigrant communities. They particularly impede the small businesses within these communities, the hair salons, bodegas, restaurants, cleaning services, gas stations, contractors/painters, and so on.

Unfortunately, many of these minority-owned small businesses cannot afford memberships and do not belong to their local chambers of commerce or other appropriate associations. As a result, they feel isolated, and not integrated into the city around them. And here's another sad truth: many of NH's minority-owned businesses did not know the Main Street Funds existed, so their opportunity to benefit from these resources passed them by as they work to sustain their businesses during these difficult times. Even more disturbing is that these disparities are not new, having existed in New Hampshire for a very long time as highlighted in the recent NHFPI report "Inequities Between New Hampshire Racial and Ethnic Groups Impact Opportunities to Thrive". We cannot allow this unjust situation to become business as usual. As these inequities become more glaring, we have the opportunity to demonstrate the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion in New Hampshire by providing for and ensuring the equitable distribution of financial resources in support of New Hampshire's communities and businesses of color.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are not about good intentions or lip service. It's about how we act and the impact we make on those we serve. Governor, I am afraid that, if we do not create programs and allocate resources to support our black, brown and new immigrant community, we will see the devastating effect it will have on small businesses, which are barely hanging on. The NAACP in Manchester gathered a list of black-owned businesses and we have reached out to some of them. Most of those stated that they did not apply to the Main Street Fund because they did not know it existed. As you know, these small businesses play a critical role in the more diverse neighborhoods in Nashua, Manchester, Concord, the Seacoast, and the spaces in between. We need to work together to ensure that these businesses and communities thrive and continue to help make New Hampshire the best state to live in and build a business. Below are our recommendations for how you can activate your diversity-equity-inclusion mindset to create a \$5,000,000 fund to support black, brown and new immigrant communities.

RECOMMENDATION: Allocate NH CARES Act Funds to black, brown and new immigrant businesses that (a) did not apply for the Mainstreet Fund because of lack of awareness; (b) are struggling and need help now; (c) need to see that our state believes in them and wants them to succeed. This would give them hope. Specifically, we recommend that the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) allocate \$5,000,000 in CARES Act funds to black, brown and new immigrant communities:

- A. \$2,000,000 for black, brown and new immigrant small businesses
- B. \$1,000,000 to strengthen and expand learning support for English Language Learners in our state who have received more incompletes than our mainstream students. Help students to better adapt to remote learning by providing the right technology and expand internet coverage in certain neighborhoods.

- C. \$1,000,000 to support organizations and individuals supporting black, brown and new immigrant communities with case management, translation services, transportation, providing food, helping individuals to complete forms, and educating community residents how to properly manage their health. Creation of an interactive hub with videos and real time connections to resources that support the people in our community.
- D. \$1,000,000 for black, brown and new immigrant student scholarships for school.
- E. Recommendation to the Governor a cabinet level position/office such as Chief of Equity (based on the new appointment in Boston by Mayor Walsh) to tackle systemic inequality.

The COVID-19 Equity Response Team, established by you on May 28, 2020, has been tasked to develop a strategy and plan to address the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We applaud the team's effort thus far and have addressed these matters with them. Our suggestion for creating the fund has broad support as evidenced by the variety of organizations endorsing this letter (please see list below).

We recognize that non-profit organizations had the opportunity to apply for CARES Act funds in recent weeks. Community liaisons have stronger relationships and influence with these communities than some of the non-profits who usually get the resources to support them. This is an opportunity to come alongside and support people in our community who might otherwise be left behind.

Respectfully Submitted,

Deogratias Mwano /s/ CEO Deo Mwano Consultant LLC, and Community Advocate

Anthony Poore /s/ Executive Director, New Hampshire Humanities

Bob McLaughlin /s/ Executive Director, National Coalition for Digital Equity

Eva Castillo-Turgeon /s/ Director of Welcoming NH

Woullard Lett /s/ Regional Lead, Unitarian Universalist Association - New
England Region

JerriAnne Boggis /s/ Executive Director, Black Heritage Trail of NH

NH black, brown and new immigrant Small Businesses

Jose Lopez /s/ Owner Liberty Taxes locations in Manchester and Nashua

Sandra Almonte /s/ Owner Don Quijote Restaurant, Manchester NH

Shamecca Brown /s/ Owner Vibes of Style, Concord NH

Calden Masonry LLC /s/, Nashua

Gail Somers /s/ Yahso Jamaican Grille , Keene NH

Bernadette Uwimana /s/ Owner Uwimana Design, Manchester NH

Courtney Daniel /s/ Owner The Courtney Daniel Brand, Portsmouth NH