



600 Kanawha Blvd., West, Charleston, West Virginia 25302
Reverend Matthew J. Watts, President

January 12, 2023

The Honorable Roger Hanshaw
Speaker of the House of Delegates
Room 228M, Building 1
State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

The Honorable Craig Blair
WV Senate President
Room 229M, Building 1
State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

Dear House Speaker Hanshaw and Senate President Blair,

The Tuesday Morning Group (TMG) is requesting that the two of you agree to include in your respective budgets \$300 million dollars of the remaining American Rescue Plan Act be allocated to support the Tuesday Morning Group Economic Justice, Fairness and Equity Plan as outlined below and in previous correspondence. We are requesting that these funds be allocated to local city municipalities or county commissioners where no local city governments exist.

The funds should be allocated to local city or county governments based on their respective percentage of the total number of people living in poverty in West Virginia. For example, Clay County, which has approximately one percent of the State's poor population, would receive appropriately \$3 million dollars in state ARPA funds. We believe that this will help meet the criteria of "Equitable Outcomes" stated in the WV ARPA plan compiled and issued by the Governor's Office.

City and county governments would be required to use the TMG Legislative Framework Plan outlined below as the basis for developing a competitive procurement process to award funds to non-profit organizations and small businesses in order to execute projects consistent with the TMG Framework. To avoid duplication of efforts, Grant award recipients should be required to align and coordinate their respective projects with existing local, county and state-funded projects in areas that are similar in nature. The West Virginia Development Office should be assigned to oversee and monitor these projects.

The TMG Plan is designed to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 in the areas of health, housing, education, employment, economics and social services coordination as outlined below.

The TMG Plan provides the legislative framework to develop the appropriate programmatic framework to address poverty and educational challenges which are the primary factors that contribute to low labor force participation and to poor community and populations' health outcomes across West Virginia.

There are nearly 300,000 West Virginians living in poverty across the 55 counties in the state. They are the most vulnerable to incur long term negative consequences resulting from COVID-19. To mitigate the negative consequences for these West Virginia residents, evidenced-based, placed-based, and people-focused strategies must be implemented to guide and direct strategically linked and targeted projects in these communities. The TMG Plan provides the framework to accomplish this approach.

This modified Plan is consistent with, but less complex than the plan that was previously submitted to you on February 1, 2022. We trust that you will review this information, give it serious consideration, and provide us with a timely response.

To advance this project during the 2023 West Virginia Legislative session, the TMG is requesting that the House and Senate leadership take the following actions:

We are requesting that the House Speaker, Senate President and House and Senate Minority Leaders agree, to submit bills that would include the TMG Plan as the plan to be used to allocate American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to local city and county governments. Funds would be awarded by city and county governments to non-profit organizations and small businesses to execute appropriately defined and approved projects in highly populated minority and other disadvantaged communities across West Virginia per the WV ARPA Plan compiled and released by the Governor's office.

It is the position of the TMG that the TMG Plan should be adopted and acted upon by the Governor and West Virginia Legislature because of its merits as follows:

1. It is consistent with the 2021 federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) legislation.
2. It is consistent with the WV ARPA Plan compiled and issued by the Governor's office which states as a goal that "Equitable Outcomes" be achieved by investing some ARPA funds to support projects in heavily populated minority communities and other disadvantaged communities across the state.
3. It is consistent with the 2017 HB-2724-The Governor's Bill - Relating to the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs (HHOMA) being authorized to develop a Pilot Project to improve community and populations' health by addressing poverty and other social determinants of health through comprehensive community development.
4. It is consistent with the stated legislative intent of the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs to develop and implement policies and programs to address the 23 findings of facts delineated in the 2003 Select Committee on Minority Affairs Report which served as the basis for the establishment of HHOMA. The Select Committee Report outlined challenges that are affecting minorities in West Virginia in the areas in health, housing, education, employment and economic development, juvenile and adult criminal justice. These challenges have not been addressed and have only been exacerbated by COVID-19. Similar challenges exist among low-income Caucasian residents and the communities where they reside. Therefore, these challenges should be addressed now per the federal ARPA legislation.

5. It is consistent with the stated objective of the West Virginia Office of Minority Health which is charged with developing and implementing programs to address racial health disparities in order to improve community and populations' health.

6. It is consistent with the 2020-SB-723 §18-2-43-Addressing school discipline in West Virginia Public Schools law which requires that the West Virginia Department of Education develop and implement a state-wide plan to address school discipline state-wide.

7. It is consistent with a campaign promise that Governor Jim Justice made as gubernatorial candidate in the fall of 2016 to a group of African American leaders. The promise was that, if he were elected Governor and African American leaders were to bring to him an idea or plan that would help the people of West Virginia, that he would support it. The idea for the 2017 HB-2724-The Governor's bill to address poverty was the original idea that was submitted to, and accepted by, Governor Justice but was never funded or implemented. The TMG Plan is an expansion of the 2017 idea with a plan that provides the legislative framework, and the ARPA provides the funding, to implement and execute the original idea around the state because funding is now available to do so.

8. It is consistent with evidence-based research conducted and compiled by the Centers for Disease Control, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and other research groups, that states that poverty and education levels are the two most critical social determinants of health that determine community and populations' health outcomes.

9. It provides a framework to address the current crisis in West Virginia public schools among school children which has been exacerbated by the COVID 19 Pandemic as evidenced by the following recently released six reports outlined below:

- i. The WV Department of Education (WVDE) discipline report that states there were over 32,000 student school suspensions from West Virginia's Public Schools during the 2021-2022 school year.
- ii. The WVDE report states that State Student Standardized Test Scores results were well below pre-COVID levels
- iii. The Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) report reveals that less than 46 percent of the 2021-2022 WV High School graduating class was enrolled in a post-secondary education or job training program. It was less than 31 percent for low-income students.
- iv. The test results of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) reveal that West Virginia students' NAEP test scores saw the sharpest decline in the nation since the test was last administered in 2019. WV had the nation's second lowest test scores.
- v. A report recently released by the ACLU revealed that West Virginia has the highest rate in the nation of its' children removed from their parents by the court and placed in foster care. And that children in West Virginia's foster care system have the highest rate of school suspensions per the WVDE State School Discipline Report.
- vi. A report recently released by the WalletHub rates West Virginia as the third least-educated state in the nation.

These six reports strongly suggest a crisis in public education in West Virginia. The academic performance of our students attending public schools is more than a measurement of their individual and collective knowledge, it is more of a measurement of the health, wellness and stability of their families, and of the communities where their families reside. Our public schools are our most accurate socio- pathological diagnostic centers, that diagnose the health and wellness of children, families and communities. They warn of the social illnesses that threaten our most vulnerable citizens, which are our children. Our children have the most under-developed social immune systems, and that is why they are the most susceptible to be most negatively affected by the social viruses associated with poverty in our society. The mental health experts now call these challenges experienced by our children Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) resulting from childhood trauma.

To effectively respond to the challenges outlined above that negatively affect our children, families and communities today, will require a research-based, place-based, people-focused, holistic comprehensive plan designed to coordinate the various services and programs offered at the point of service delivery. The TMG strongly believes that the HOPE/TMG West Side Revive Movement Model outlined in the TMG Legislative Plan to Mitigate the Negative Consequences of COVID 19 provides the comprehensive framework needed at this time.

Therefore, the Tuesday Morning Group is requesting that the House Speaker and Senate President, with support from the House and Senate Minority Leaders, submit bills to the WV legislature that would designate the TMG Legislative Package as the framework to Mitigate the Negative Impact of COVID 19 in low-income communities and among low-income residents in West Virginia.

Furthermore, the TMG requests that \$300 million dollars of the remaining American Rescue Plan Act funds be allocated to fund projects that are consistent with this plan.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with each of you and are willing to answer any questions that you might have. We respectfully request that you acknowledge receipt of this correspondence.

Respectfully submitted by,

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