



935 Gravier Street • New Orleans, LA, 70112 • www.unitehere.org

March 23, 2020

Dear Mr. Sawaya:

We are urgently writing to you on behalf of New Orleans hospitality workers to request that you and the Morial Convention Center Authority Board of Directors immediately release a portion of the Authority's cash reserves to provide relief to all employees working for companies that contract with the convention center, as well as the city's broader hospitality workforce.

Hard-working people who have been essential to the success of the Morial Convention Center's success, from banquet servers, bartenders, cooks, and others, are being laid off and losing desperately needed income. We are requesting that the Board re-appropriate a portion of the more than \$200 million in cash reserves to ensure all employees working for companies contracted with the convention center continue to be compensated during the month of April at an amount equal to each employee's February earnings at the convention center.

While we understand these resources were previously budgeted for other priorities, we believe there is no more urgent and dire priority than returning back to these workers a portion of the reserves they helped produce in order to pay their bills, buy groceries, and take care of their loved ones during this time of financial crisis.

In addition, we request the Board re-appropriate reserves for the purpose of providing relief to the broader hospitality workforce in our city. Such a relief effort must be administered directly to hospitality workers to provide much needed financial relief in a fair, legal, and transparent way.

For these reasons, and to ensure maximum public accountability, we recommend no less than \$100 million in the Authority's cash reserves be transferred to an independent fund with robust and transparent community oversight that is directly administrated to workers in need.

Please do not hesitate to act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marlene Patrick-Cooper".

Marlene Patrick-Cooper
President, UNITE HERE Local 23