

Dear Commissioner Brieve,

My name is Sue Ellis and I'm a resident of Gaines Township. I want to thank you for your work as Vice Chair on the Kent County Finance and Physical Resources subcommittee. I am part of a group of representatives from Grand Rapids area congregations and community institutions working together to build relationships across lines that divide our community. Recently we have conducted 500 conversations with a diverse array of community members about the challenges they are facing in the wake of the pandemic. Based on our research, we would like to bring to your attention needs that would benefit from additional allocations of funds from the COVID Relief Fund grant.

As we understand it, the COVID County budget has \$12 million un-allocated dollars. We respectfully submit the following proposal for additional allocations:

1. Workplace safety support: \$100,000

For Health Department inspections to ensure local businesses are following COVID safety precautions. We have heard from many employees who fear for their jobs if they make a complaint about workplace safety.

2. Testing: \$11,300,000

According to modeling done by the Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard and its "Roadmap to Pandemic Resilience" paper,* more funding than the currently proposed \$4,900,000 for testing would be needed for a county our size. We note that the Grand Rapids African American Community Task Force is seeking additional funding for mobile testing and LatinxGR is also concerned about adequate testing funds.

3. Contact Tracing: \$5,200,000

Estimates by Harvard's Safra Center for Ethics for funding for a county our size are more than twice as much as the currently proposed \$2,100,000.* This additional funding would support the Grand Rapids African American Community Task Force's proposals as well. We suggest that tracing jobs could be created in partnership with the Kent County Jail's returning citizens and/or Family Outreach Center's "Seeking Safety" program for young men recovering from abuse.

4. Supported isolation: \$2,500,000

This is an essential part of the Testing, Tracing, and Supported Isolation (TTSI) strategy for more effective containment of the virus going forward.* This amount would cover 5000 people staying 5 nights in a hotel at \$100/night.

5. Rent/housing assistance: \$5,500,000

This need continues to grow as the economy contracts. Our proposal adds \$2 million to the currently allocated amount.

6. Translation of COVID information materials: \$96,000

As LatinxGR also notes, information in languages other than English is sorely needed to reach the diverse populations within Kent County.

Thank you for this opportunity to voice our concerns and for your consideration of the needs and challenges faced by so many members of our community.

Respectfully,

Sue Ellis

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*Sources cited:

“Roadmap to Pandemic Resilience”:

https://ethics.harvard.edu/files/center-for-ethics/files/roadmaptopandemicresilience_final_o.pdf

More information, including calculation formulas for numbers of tests and tracers, can be found at <https://www.pandemictesting.org/>

A shorter article can be found here:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/04/20/three-key-ideas-stake-post-coronavirus-future/>