

To: Rosalynn Bliss, City of Grand Rapids, Mayor
Mandy Bolter, Chair, Kent County Board of Commissioners
Wayman Britt, County Administrator, County of Kent
Mark Washington, City of Grand Rapids, City Manager

From: Carrie Boer, Peter C. and Emajeon Cook Foundation
Bill Lawrence, Jandernoa Foundation
Julie Ridenour, Steelcase Foundation
Diana Sieger, Grand Rapids Community Foundation
Michelle Van Dyke, Heart of West Michigan United Way
Mark Van Putten, The Wege Foundation
Kate Wolters, KRW Foundation
W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Date: May 11, 2020

RE: **Emergency Funding distribution from the Federal Government – City of Grand Rapids and the County of Kent**

Our community's response to the devastation caused by COVID-19 needs to be a strong, coordinated effort. That means understanding how the dollars earmarked to provide support necessary to lessen the pain can best be distributed, a process which should involve those voices representing all sectors in our community with an emphasis on transparency.

Philanthropic leaders have been meeting regularly for the past few weeks to coordinate our funding and leadership to aid in this crisis. **The philanthropic response was never meant to be the near and long-term solution to our community's efforts. While philanthropic resources are critical, they do not approach the scope of CARES funding, FEMA funding and other resources funneled into Kent County and the City of Grand Rapids for further distribution.**

Philanthropy is eager to work hand in hand with the public sector – our partners – while recognizing our inability to replace the magnitude of the dollars now in your hands. We strongly encourage the County and City both to include in your decision-making processes the Continuum of Care (CoC) and other knowledgeable and engaged partners, including philanthropy. **This is an opportunity to demonstrate this community's coordinated approach and strength in collaboration.** We implore you to include those partners closer to providing services to the most vulnerable in our community. It is critical that our entire community be able to receive needed support regardless of racial background, language spoken, status, technological access, literacy, and any other demographic dimensions.

More specifically, while the Heart of West Michigan United Way has created the Coronavirus Response Fund, those resources will not be available to effectively respond to rapid and ever-growing needs as we move into a more critical phase of this crisis. In addition, while other funds have been created, they are only meant to bridge to the larger pools of funding now coming into the community through state and federal sources.

Collective involvement in the decisions of strategic fund use for the community is critical to effective deployment. We thank you in advance for the opportunity to have all voices at the table. Your leadership is truly appreciated.