

MAY 14, 2020



County Judge Lina Hidalgo  
Commissioner Rodney Ellis, Precinct 1  
Commissioner Adrian Garcia, Precinct 2  
Commissioner Steve Radack, Precinct 3  
Commissioner R. Jack Cagle, Precinct 4

## Dear Judge Hidalgo and Harris County Commissioners

We are activists, organizers, faith leaders, lawyers, and residents of Harris County writing to you today to thank you for passing the Harris County COVID-19 Relief Fund and to ask for your continued support. Commissioners Court has broad authority to implement a measure for the public health, safety, and economic security of our county in such a time as this. Indeed, there has not been so great a need for such a measure previously in most of our lifetimes.

[Under Chapter 418](#) of the Government Code, the County Judge has broad authority to issue directives to protect the health and safety during a declared disaster. Ensuring that people have access to food and housing by making this fund available to them certainly falls under that provision. The circumstances are too dire, and the risk of not making this fund available is too great, for the Court not to use their power during this time to help people. We believe that you also have a moral obligation to act.

Other jurisdictions around the state, like [San Antonio](#) and [Austin](#), have passed similar relief funds to uplift and protect vulnerable community members because they are experiencing the same thing that we are. This assistance is necessary to provide direct financial support to residents left out of the federal stimulus passed in response to COVID-19, including college students, dependent adults with disabilities, formerly incarcerated individuals, those accused of a crime, non-citizens and their families, and our most impoverished residents who are homeless or otherwise in deep poverty. In addition, as you wisely considered and included in the fund, it is necessary to help those who are experiencing domestic violence, youth and young adults with lived experience in the child welfare system, and all other Harris County residents regardless of their legal status, child support status, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and age.

Ultimately, the one-time federal stimulus checks will not be sufficient to meet the needs of many of our local residents who were lucky enough to qualify. Where the federal and state governments have failed us, we praise you for stepping in and developing a mechanism that provides unrestricted financial support to vulnerable



communities. In order to make sure as much of the money as possible goes to people in need, we ask that you please (1) increase the amount of the fund to at least 10% to account for grantee organizations' overhead and/or (2) require that in selecting grantee organizations, there is a prioritization of organizations who already have direct relationships with impacted communities.

It is estimated that the Houston metro area has already lost [200,000 low-income jobs](#) due to COVID-19. The simple fact is that we are in an unprecedented crisis, and it is time to recognize that we will all rise or all fall together. We are not equipped to survive as individuals, or as a community, without this relief fund.

We remain available to support your work to create this fund by bringing forth the stories of our members who are suffering. Thank you for all the work that has gone into getting the fund this far. We ask you to continue to partner with us to make sure the fund becomes a reality as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

