



THE NEW JERSEY LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS

July 23, 2020

Honorable Phil Murphy
Governor
State of New Jersey
225 West State Street
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney
Kingsway Commons, Suite 400
West Deptford, NJ 08086

Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin
569 Rahway Avenue
Woodbridge, NJ 07095

Dear Governor Murphy, Senate President Sweeney and Speaker Coughlin:

I am in receipt of today's legislative leadership's statement asserting that

- the role of the Select Commission on Emergency COVID-19 Borrowing is to simply say "yes" or "no" to proposals by the administration to issue bonds
- that it is the Legislature's responsibility to provide oversight for the "amount and timing" of loans, and
- that the requirement is for revenue spending decisions to "go through the legislative budget process and be subject to review by all legislators" beginning with the diverse members of the houses' budget and appropriations committees.

As Chair of the New Jersey Legislative Black Caucus, this letter affirms that our members acknowledge the magnitude of the economic challenges we face as a state and the frightful realities experienced by individual residents in every community. We know this is a historically difficult time for all and that managing the crisis will be fraught with hard choices and painful compromises.

In light of minority exclusion from the Select Commission, this letter also serves as a reminder that many caucus legislators have reached our saturation point for being discounted and barred from preliminary discussions on key and emerging issues. We reject being relegated to having to try to affect impact after momentum has already been gained toward a particular outcome that overlooks the needs of communities of color. Although the four-person panel is now established, our interest in its deliberations and decisions is only heightened. And

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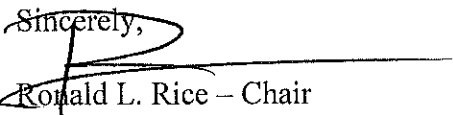
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BENJIE E. WIMBERLY

now, rather than contribute our input at the table, we will have to raise our voices publicly.

In the midst of a national cry for inclusivity, I feel our caucus is once again, inconceivably, subjugated to monitoring a process from afar. The diversity of the budget and appropriations committees notwithstanding, I hope additional caucus members will be included as consultants and relied on for expertise and insight. I also recommend that the panel forms a close partnership with Lieutenant Governor Oliver and Chief Diversity Officer Agudosi with the express purpose of ensuring that the bonds are co-managed by minority firms and that the award of funding to communities, sectors and areas be commensurate with need. We seek assurance that the residents and communities that have suffered the greatest health and economic damage – including people of color, women, the disadvantaged and poor – be extended every advantage to level the playing field once and for all.

As I'm sure you're aware, I am dedicated and available to work toward equality and justice in any way required and I look forward to making New Jersey the nation's standard-bearer for economic and social reform.

Sincerely,



Ronald L. Rice – Chair
New Jersey Legislative Black Caucus

CC: Honorable Sheila Y. Oliver – Lt. Governor
NJLBC Members
NJLBC- Civil Rights Partners Coalition Members
NJ Black Elected Officials Statewide Policy Alliance Members (NJBEOPA)
NJLBC State wide Faith-Based Partners Members