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COUNCILMEMBER AT-LARGE

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New Orleans City Council

November 7, 2023

Dear Governor-Elect Landry and Members of the New Orleans Transition Committee,

First, thank you to Governor-Elect Landry for demonstrating that New Orleans is a major priority to the incoming administration. Also, thank you to each member of the New Orleans Transition Committee for your willingness to serve.

I have been contacted by many members of the committee to provide guidance on our city's challenges and ways the governor-elect could provide assistance via executive order along with longer-term goals through state legislation. Here are my suggestions on a variety of different topics, legislative and budgetary items, and policy matters. I hope the below recommendations prove helpful and will gladly provide additional details if needed.

IMMEDIATE INITIATIVES (NON-LEGISLATIVE)

PUBLIC HEALTH/PUBLIC SAFETY:

1. Launch statewide campaign to promote safe gun storage and promote Louisiana Secure Storage Tax Credit. Between 2017-2021, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) reported 5,500 stolen firearms were recovered in crimes from New Orleans.
2. Change the Medicaid provider rates to drastically increase mental health and substance abuse assistance. The Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office reports at least half of incarcerated individuals have underlying mental health issues.
3. Create a cabinet position specifically tasked with combating homelessness by boosting rapid rehousing and wraparound services for stabilization. Responsibilities would include working hand in hand with legislators, the Louisiana Housing Corporation (LHC), and parish leaders to develop effective strategies.
4. Appoint an Opioid Czar to tackle the opioid epidemic, an issue that is overwhelming cities like New Orleans. Roughly 1,300 people in Louisiana die annually from opioid overdoses. The Orleans/Jefferson region ranks worst in Louisiana for opioid-related deaths.
5. Support victims of crime by launching an information campaign for the Louisiana Crime Victims Reparations Fund. Few individuals are aware of this available financial assistance.

LAW ENFORCEMENT/PUBLIC SAFETY:

6. Provide additional probation/parole officers to ensure proper monitoring for individuals under supervision.
7. Commit to fully responding to interstate traffic incidents through the Louisiana Department of Public Safety (DPS) or the Louisiana State Police (LSP) to free up thousands of New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) manpower hours. A report by AHDanalytics is attached with information on this matter along with additional reports on current NOPD manpower issues.
8. Ensure Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LaDOTD) traffic cameras are readily available to NOPD for investigations.
9. Rapidly address the DNA testing backlog using increased state resources and/or private labs.

SALTWATER INTRUSION:

10. Coordinate a multi-parish task force to determine permanent solution(s) for what will likely be a reoccurring issue. Jefferson and Orleans Parishes have recently been spared the effects of intruding saltwater; that being said, a long-term solution should be implemented should parishes not be so lucky in future years.

QUALITY OF LIFE:

11. Commit to scheduled and frequent sweeps by LaDOTD to clean up areas mired with illegal dumping of tires and trash on state/interstate roads.
12. Increase landscaping, striping, and beautification for state highways such as Chef Menteur Highway, Hayne Boulevard, Claiborne Avenue, Broad Street, and other corridors throughout the city.

UTILITY COSTS:

13. In December 2022, the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) granted a reward waiver to allocate CDBG-DR funding toward utility restoration costs stemming from Hurricane Ida. Allowing for a portion of the CDBG dollars to help cover some of the related storm costs would lessen the burden on utility ratepayers.

BUDGETARY:

14. Order a pause of millions of dollars in penalty payments owed to the Municipal Police Employee Retirement System (MPERS) until the Louisiana Legislature has an opportunity to review potential changes that would prevent unintended consequences currently being felt by the City of New Orleans. At present, the City is being penalized by MPERS to the tune of more than \$38 million over the next 15 years for the drastic drop in NOPD officers. State law requires that if a police department drops by more than 50 participating employees in a year, the department is deemed partially dissolved and therefore penalized. This language is overly punitive to a larger-scale department like the NOPD, and a percentage-based system would be a much better approach.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/JOB CREATION/WORKFORCE HOUSING:

15. Support planning for the off-shore wind industry sector along with transmission planning. GNO, Inc. has been a tremendous partner in this effort and can demonstrate that the New

Orleans region and Louisiana as a whole have the capacity to become a major player in this industry. Loyola University, Tulane University, and the University of New Orleans are already embracing and becoming true centers of excellence for this sector, including the training of students for careers in wind and the development of new technology.

16. Create a task force to develop a viable tax credit assistance program for workforce housing development. It is essential to close funding gaps and build a continuous stream of housing production to increase affordability and keep our labor force closer to job centers. New Orleans continues to face a major affordable housing crisis.

MAJOR EVENTS:

17. Assist with resources and funding for major events including the Sugar Bowl, Essence Fest, and Super Bowl activities and ensure that if state funds are allocated, events commit to inclusivity of local vendors, businesses, and artists.

HEALTH CARE:

18. Review the number of Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) in the state's Medicaid system and determine if a smaller number would create efficiencies and better care for Louisiana residents.
19. Ensure that low state health rankings are improved by incentivizing positive public health outcomes as part of Medicaid contracts. The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) should work closely to create appropriate incentives.

WOMEN AND FAMILIES:

20. Louisiana is one of the "worst states for women" – particularly for Black women and women of color. Tackling this issue on all fronts will mostly impact women and families in New Orleans. Almost half of families in New Orleans are single-mother households, and 58% of those single mothers are living in poverty. This in turn leaves two-out-of-five children in New Orleans growing up in poverty. Overall, Louisiana ranks 2nd highest in the nation for women living in poverty. When it comes to mothers, Louisiana also ranks at the top of the list for maternal mortality rates, impacting Black women more than any other demographic. Louisiana also continues to rank in the top five for domestic violence murders; New Orleans itself has seen a significant rise in domestic violence since the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Require LDH to create metric-based incentives for Medicaid managed care organizations that include maternal mortality and infant mortality.
 - Ensure assistance for state employees who are victims of domestic violence and prevent any adverse employment actions. Attached is an executive order from the State of Ohio on this matter.
 - Many of the issues impacting women most significantly will require targeted legislation and funding. For example, last year was the first in many years where the state made a major budget allocation to domestic violence services in the amount of \$7 million thanks to Senator Jimmy Harris (District 4). My office can provide a complete list of legislative and funding recommendations at your request.

NEW ORLEANS LEGISLATIVE AND FUNDING ITEMS

There are numerous legislative and funding items that are critical to New Orleans. This includes matters ranging from creating a fairer share of tourism tax revenue for New Orleans, to working to increase mental health services, to reforming the Orleans Parish Communication District (OPCD/911 services), to funding our capital outlay requests, and much more.

I would prefer our talented New Orleans legislative delegation members collectively weigh in and have them take the lead in providing a comprehensive list of legislative priorities. The City works very closely with many members of the legislature including Senator Royce Duplessis (District 5) who maintains a seat on the New Orleans Transition Committee.

Once again, thank you for your willingness to serve, please do not hesitate to contact me for any additional information or with questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helena Moreno', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Helena Moreno
New Orleans City Council Vice President

Attachments:

- Ohio Executive Order 2019-09D - Workplace Domestic Violence Policy in State Government
- AHDanalytics Report – Interstate Calls for Service
- AHDanalytics – 2022 Public Safety Overview
- AHDanalytics – 2023 Q2 Public Safety Overview