

June 9, 2020

Governor Brian Kemp
The Office of the Governor
206 Washington Street
111 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Governor Kemp and Members of the Georgia General Assembly,

Thank you for your work in service of our state during this very difficult time. As partners in the effort to help our state recover, we are asking you to take action to protect the funding of critical services and programs in Georgia. The steep proposed 14 percent cuts would serve to exacerbate the health and economic problems Georgians currently face.

This level of underfunding core programs and services like education and health care would represent the deepest cuts Georgia has seen in modern history. Georgia cannot cut its way to prosperity; that much has been made clear in the aftermath of the Great Recession and in the midst of this global pandemic. Deep cuts will disproportionately harm communities of color and rural communities and curb the state's ability to recover.

The undersigned call on state leaders to do everything in their power to avoid devastating cuts that will impact the people who call Georgia home:

- Cuts would likely disproportionately hurt public schools and higher education, leading to teacher furloughs, larger class sizes, fewer instructional days, higher local property taxes and the elimination of enrichment programs such as art and music, as we saw in the wake of the Great Recession.
- Cuts will make it more difficult to help families make ends meet as the caseload of already-overworked frontline workers for key safety net programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), may face yet another increase in work due to layoffs or furloughs.
- Cuts are likely to affect Georgia's already-weak health care infrastructure in the middle of a pandemic response.
- And cuts will disproportionately harm people of color, who are already suffering from COVID-19 at higher rates and facing the brunt of the layoffs.

We cannot cut our way to prosperity and ask that you look to new revenues to avert deep budget cuts that will have generational impacts.

Thankfully, Georgia does have options to raise revenue instead of simply cutting services. Some of these options include lifting the tobacco tax to the national average, closing special interest loopholes and removing Georgia's "double deduction"--an itemized tax break for paid state taxes that is only available to a fraction of Georgia filers who earn an average of \$240,000 a year. These solutions would allow Georgia to prioritize long-term recovery with investments in health, education, the safety net and other key programs and services.

Georgians want a budget that funds their priorities: in a recent poll by the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute, more Georgians preferred that the state raise revenues instead of cutting critical programs and services. In fact, 78.3 percent opposed budget cuts if they touch on public safety, health care and education and 68.1 percent oppose cuts that involve layoffs.

Georgians in your community need your help. Raising new revenues can prevent the acceleration of a massive economic downturn, severely underfunding schools and negatively affecting the lives of millions of Georgians in every community across the state.

Thank you for considering options to help avert deep budget cuts that will have negative implications on nearly all communities across Georgia.

Sincerely,

159 Georgia Together

9to5, Georgia

Achieve Atlanta

AIDS Research Consortium of Atlanta

Aniz, Inc.

Atlanta Soul

Bell Primary Care, LLC

Betty and Davis Fitzgerald Foundation

Center for Pan Asian Community Services, Inc (CPACS)

Deep Center

Feminist Women's Health Center

Georgia Budget and Policy Institute

Georgia Conservation Voters

Georgia Equality

Georgia NAACP

Georgia Stand-Up

Georgians for a Healthy Future

International Rescue Committee

Latin American Association

Latino Community Fund Inc.

League of Women Voters of Georgia

Madeleine Frey Consulting

Mental Health America of Georgia

Nana Grants

New Georgia Project

Open Hand Atlanta

Path Project

*Physicians for a National Health
Program (PNHP)—GA Chapter*

*Planned Parenthood Southeast
Advocates*

Premier Ultimate League

Project South

PSE

Quintin R. Robinson, M.D.

Rep GA Institute Inc

*Represent Georgia Action Network,
Inc.*

*Solutions NOT Punishment
Collaborative*

THRIVE Support Services, Inc

cc: The Georgia General Assembly
206 Washington St SW
Atlanta, GA 30334