Dear Governor Kemp,

The proposed budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 includes $1.2 billion in continued cuts from FY 2020 state spending to programs and services across Georgia. At a time when millions of families are experiencing greater needs due to the pandemic, this budget would underfund Georgia’s schools, services for Georgians with disabilities, anti-poverty programs, public safety and more.

Georgians need more support from the state, especially after budget cuts of approximately $1.7 billion are expected to be implemented during the 2021 fiscal year. An equitable economic recovery is important for every Georgian and critical for the state’s future. These budget cuts and policy choices put Georgia’s future at risk.

This budget represents a choice to underfund state government at a critical time when Georgians are relying on our state for support. This is not the best path forward, and we know there are options to help Georgia restore funding to vital services and programs, address COVID-19 and foster prosperity in every community.

While we continue to advocate for increased federal relief, there are clear options you and other state leaders can pursue to help eliminate these budget cuts.

We must deploy funds from the state’s Revenue Shortfall Reserve (RSR). This rainy-day fund, which was created to allow our state to avoid steep budget cuts in the event of an economic downturn, currently holds $2.7 billion, with $1.685 billion available to be released for appropriation at any time. Although the COVID-19 recession has been among the most devastating economic and social events in history, Georgia has deviated from prior responses to economic recessions by choosing to make billions in cuts alone without drawing from the state’s near-record-level rainy-day fund to supplement revenue shortfalls. If now is not the time to tap into these reserves, then when is?

State services like K-12 education, public health and behavioral health services have been underfunded since the Great Recession, and in this latest budget proposal, Georgia would spend $100 less per person than it did in 2008. While the option to use funding from our state’s robust RSR will not address the long-term effects of COVID-19 or the chronic underfunding of education, health and other critical services, it can provide immediate
funding to reduce or eliminate budget cuts. You can also urge lawmakers to raise new revenues in order to ensure long-term recovery.

We also know these budget cuts continue to have a disproportionate effect on rural communities and on Georgians of color. When we look at underlying numbers among unemployment rates, we see that Black Georgians are facing greater hardship. These communities cannot recover during continued budget cuts.

The best way to fully recovery from this pandemic is to invest in the programs and services Georgians rely on and put people first. We cannot cut our way to prosperity.

We urge you to put the needs of Georgians first with the consideration of these policy options that would help eliminate harmful budget cuts and mitigate the harm of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on every Georgia community.

Sincerely,

9to5
Achieve Atlanta
ACLU of Georgia
Agnes Scott College
Alcohol & Drug Abuse Certification Board of Georgia (ADACBGA)
Alliance Recovery Center, Inc.
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Georgia Chapter
Ann Duffy
Atlanta Center for Self Sufficiency
Atlanta Wealth Building Initiative
Beyond The Bell (Savannah)
Brooks County NAACP Branch #5173
Center for Pan Asian Community Services
Center for Racial Healing
CivicGeorgia
Coalición de Líderes Latinos-CLILA
Coalition of Refugee Service Agencies
Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta
Community Farmers Markets
Corners Outreach
Deep Center
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
Eddie Bogan
Elysian Community Development Corporation
Emmaus House
Faith in Public Life
Gateway Center
Gateway Treatment Centers
Georgia Black Constructors Association
Georgia Budget and Policy Institute
Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda
Georgia Conservation Voters
Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities
Georgia Equality
Georgia Hispanic Construction Association
Georgia Interfaith Public Policy Center
Georgia NAACP
Georgia Organics
Georgia Shift Action
Georgia State AFL-CIO
Georgia Supportive Housing Association, Inc.
Georgia WAND
Georgia Women (and Those Who Stand With Us)
Georgia Working Families Party
Georgians for a Healthy Future
Glenda Minkin
Harambee House, Inc.
Hosea Helps, Inc.
Indivisible Georgia Coalition
Jewish Community Relations Council
Jewish Democratic Women’s Salon
Lois Frank
Mercy Care
New Georgia Project Action Fund
New Sanctuary Movement of Atlanta
New Vision MSK
Norelie Garcia Valentin
Park Place Outreach
Partnership for Southern Equity
Poder Latinx
Presbyterians for a Better Georgia
R. Howard Dobbs, Jr. Foundation
Rep GA Institute, Inc.
Step Up Savannah
STRIVE Atlanta
The Latin American Association
The National Domestics Workers Alliance - We Dream In Black
The New Georgia Project
The People's Agenda - Savannah
The Scholarship Academy
Tom Boller
United Campus Workers of Georgia, Communications Workers of America
Women Watch Afrika, Inc.