**Template Letter for Community Members & CBOs to Advocate for American Rescue Plan Act Funding**

The purpose of this letter template is to provide community-based organizations, coalitions, and community leaders with an outline to draft priorities and demands addressed to their County Boards of Supervisors and/or City Councils to advocate for the equitable use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) local funds. [Click here](https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds) to learn more about the funding objectives of the ARPA local aid. This template may be altered to fit the needs and social landscape of different cities and counties and is intentional with focusing on investments in public health, health equity and racial justice. We wanted to give special thanks and credit to CARES for the People Coalition in Sacramento, California for the original content which informed this template letter.

*[Delete the above section and edit below]*

Month Day, Year

Hon. Name, Chair, Supervisor/Councilmember *(for city council members in cities)*, District X

Hon. Name, Vice Chair, Supervisor/Councilmember, District X

Hon. Name, Supervisor/Councilmember, District X

Hon. Name, Supervisor/Councilmember, District X

Hon. Name, Supervisor/Councilmember, District X

*Sent via Email*

Re: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding Recommendations

XXXXX County Board of Supervisors/City Council,

This letter is being sent on behalf of [community members, organizations, coalitions] listed below and outlines recommended spending priorities for the more than $XXX million American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds (find your [city](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1KXsQKxF4IDVeqRNeA6n3kwEmn7gs8ZU0DXzg_ghYeP8/edit#gid=1693427342) or [county](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1dZqYXvaeIGwlFOJYlDBq2WgsUdm8ZLoN-hsWzQcmqpk/edit#gid=152021275) allocation here) received by XXXX County/City. As a broad, diverse, and unified coalition, we are providing guidance for distribution of the funds with a focus on transparency and long-term investments that will address root causes of disparities. Proper use of the ARPA funds requires county/city leaders to be driven by the responsibility to improve the health and well-being of community members and hear the voices of those who are most affected and in need.

It is critical that health equity and racial justice be the highest motivation and priority in the allocation and distribution of ARPA funds. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the unacceptable conditions caused by racial and health inequities [optionally, add local or regionally specific example]. These funds should be used to provide immediate relief *and* long-term improvements in the lives of the most vulnerable people in our city/county, including children, older adults, people with disabilities, unhoused individuals and families, and people of color. As a coalition, we advocate for city/county leadership to prioritize our low-income neighbors and communities of color through implementation of core fundamental strategies used to determine allocation and a transparent process.

**Fundamental Strategies**

**Transparency**

Budget processes that exclude the public are unacceptable, and we are holding our leaders in XXXX City/County accountable to provide detailed information about how ARPA funds are allocated and spent, including but not limited to: (1) inclusion of community input in the decision-making process; (2) where all $XX million in ARPA funds are allocated and spent, including the intended strategy and outcomes; (3) the amount of ARPA funding each department is responsible for overseeing; (4) how much ARPA funding will reach each neighborhood in XXXX City/County; and (5) detailed information about the selection process for funding recommendations.

**Long-Term Investment**

To begin the long process of addressing the inequities in our communities and their foundational causes, the full potential of ARPA funds must be leveraged. ARPA funding does not expire until May 2024, intended for long-term commitments that can improve the quality of life in underinvested communities. This requires thoughtful approaches to economic investments and systemic health equity changes and policy adjustments, while also addressing immediate needs for communities hit hardest by the pandemic.

**Underserved Communities**

XXXX City/County has historically undervalued low-income and communities of color through an unbalanced budget that directs disproportionate funding to law enforcement. In fact, more than XX percent of the City/County’s budget has been historically allocated to law enforcement through sometimes hidden and surprising allocations (*finding the figure for your city/county can be challenging due to overlapping localities and the availability of recent data, but here are some places to start for* [*cities*](https://www.vera.org/publications/what-policing-costs-in-americas-biggest-cities) *and* [*general research*](https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/what-police-spending-data-can-and-cannot-explain-amid-calls-defund-police)). XXXX (your city/county name) community members have been clear that this kind of budget and process does not reflect their values, and many have shared their own People’s Budget priorities which emphasizes community health and well-being. In recognition of the real needs of our communities, our coalition requires the ARPA funds be spent in totality on racial and health inequities that have been exacerbated by XXXX City/County’s historical spending pattern. As a demonstrated effort to redress this pattern, all funds should be spent on our under-resourced communities throughout XXXX City/County.

**Required ARPA Funding Categories**

During this difficult time, the need to change spending patterns has become clearer. Our coalition requires 100% of ARPA funds be spent in the following areas to begin the rebuilding process within our disadvantaged communities. These funds need to be directed to the community with a specific focus on small, local organizations and reach XXXX City/County’s diverse population, including communities of color, under-resourced communities, elder/senior population, and youth.

* Health Equity: The pandemic amplified existing health disparities and created a major health crisis, which brought to light the incredible health inequities challenging the most vulnerable communities in XXXX City/County. One third of the ARPA funding ($100 million) should go to addressing systemic health inequities within XXXX City/County, with a minimum of 50% of those funds going directly to community organizations. Funding should:
	+ Provide continued immediate relief efforts to provide food security, mental health care, and vaccinations to communities.
	+ Prioritize vaccinations for those currently incarcerated. We acknowledge here that by prioritizing individuals who are currently incarcerated, we are supporting those most vulnerable in society and that this is a step forward in racial equity, as [communities of color are the most impacted by systemic mass incarceration.](https://covidprisonproject.com/)
	+ Establish a community-based and culturally appropriate infrastructure in partnership with XXXX City/County Public Health and local health institutions, with the goal of breaking long-standing health inequities, and focused on healthy living.
	+ Provide direct support to the elderly/senior population that has been dramatically impacted by the pandemic.
	+ Bolster COVID-19 testing and vaccine capacity for communities of color and other vulnerable populations.
* Housing and Unhoused Communities: Families and women of color throughout the county are facing a financial crisis. Housing and rental costs are unmanageable. The pandemic has magnified income, employment and living condition inequities, which will continue to lead to an increase in homelessness, preventable illness and unnecessary loss of life. The ARPA funds must support the following:
* Immediate individual and family needs, including rent/mortgage assistance, motel vouchers and financial support.
* An increase in development and release of affordable housing.
* Homelessness intervention, support and diverse strategies of prevention (including transitional housing, mixed-use housing, shelter in place housing).
* Funding for innovative joint County-City homeless outreach initiatives and health care services.
* Economic Development: Small businesses are the backbone of our neighborhoods, but small businesses in low-income neighborhoods that are owned by people of color are most vulnerable to closure. Partnerships with large and small employers for workforce training are required in our community, including opportunities to support systems involved with youth and adult re-entry. ARPA funds must prioritize support for:
	+ Small minority, women and family-owned businesses.
* Inclusive economic development for low-income neighborhoods, with an emphasis on communities of color.
* Workforce development for residents without work or in low-wage positions, including youth, re-entry workers (older adults/seniors).
* Hiring bilingual employees at livable wages to support the provision of services and economic development.
* [Add additional priority areas for your city/county grounded in an equitable recovery]:

On behalf of and in partnership with those in XXXX City/County hit hardest by the pandemic, the individuals, coalitions, and organizations below require a transparent and inclusive budgeting process. Furthermore, ARPA funds must be used for long-term investment strategies that address regional health equity, housing and homelessness, community economic development [Add additional priority areas for your city/county grounded in an equitable recovery].

Leadership matters. Our community – your constituents – are counting on you to do the right thing. We look forward to continuing our work together in partnership and with a strong commitment to serving all XXXX City/County community members well.

In community,

[undersigned organizations, community leaders, businesses, etc. who support these demands]