



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Boston's COVID-19 Recovery
Kenzie Bok, Chair

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

February 2, 2022

Dear Councilors:

Docket #0160, message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Five Million Dollars (\$5,000,000.00) in the form of a grant, awarded by the United States Department of the Treasury, to be administered by the City's Chief Financial Officer/Collector-Treasurer, from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund in the Treasury of the United States established by Section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, was sponsored by the Administration, and referred to the Committee on January 26, 2022. The Committee held a public hearing on February 1, 2022.

Summary of Legislation:

This legislation authorizes the City to accept and expend \$5,000,000 from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (CSLFRF) established by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). The money is to be directed to the Small Business Relief Fund (SBRF) 2.0, to fund additional relief and recovery grants for local small businesses in Boston.

Information Gathered at the Hearing:

Chief of Economic Opportunity & Inclusion Segun Idowu and Mayor's Office of Economic Development Director of Small Business Natalia Urtubey testified at the hearing on behalf of the Administration. It was explained that various funds have provided \$29.7M in grants for small business relief to more than 5,600 businesses since April 2020. SBRF 2.0, specifically, issued \$8M in grants to 628 businesses in September 2021, and acceptance of **Docket #0160** will allow the fund to fund grants to an estimated 300 additional businesses. It was explained that SBRF 2.0 is designed to cover expenses to aid a business's recovery and to help them grow beyond the pandemic, and businesses can apply for a Relief Grant and/or a Growth Grant up to \$10,000. The new appropriation will continue to support the priority businesses previously identified as hardest hit, with a focus on food service and production, arts and entertainment, and fitness, wellness, and recreation. Applications are available in eleven languages, and accepted on a rolling basis. The SBRF 2.0 applications can also be tracked on the Small Business Development Office's portal, and the Office is working on a rollout of a public dashboard. The panel reviewed outreach efforts, including weekly small business conference calls, a weekly newsletter, weekly business walks with Mayor Wu and Chief Idowu, and partnership with City Councilors to spread the word to interested constituents.

Rationale and Recommended Action:

Director Urtubey noted that there are currently 2,466 small business grant applicants, requesting a total of \$40.5 Million in small business relief funding. The panel emphasized that small businesses should also work to avail themselves of other relief for which they may be eligible, including state aid. The Chair noted that the State has also received funding from ARPA, and the City should ensure it is not losing out on a share of support proportionate to our population and populations affected by the pandemic. **Docket #0160** can provide a small amount of immediate funding, however, to fill some of that backlog. The Chair noted that the Committee will continue to monitor use of ARPA funding and remain committed to facilitating community input for use of the funding.

The Chair of the Committee on Boston's COVID-19 Recovery, to which the following was referred:

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submits a report recommending that this docket ought to pass.



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