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2019 Legislative Priorities

Education

- ***Kirwan Commission*** – While I am disappointed in the Kirwan Commission’s decision to delay comprehensive policy recommendations and changes to the current *Thornton* funding formula, I will be fully supportive of funding and policy priorities for FY 2020, including expansion of early childhood education programs for ***all*** three and four-year-olds; full-day Pre-K; increasing health and behavioral health funding and extending declining enrollment grants. Any proposed new funding allocation must be distributed equitably, with substantially greater resources going to those jurisdictions with high concentrations of poverty.
- ***State CIP – School Construction (Knott Commission)*** – Baltimore City has some of the oldest school building stock in the state, with nearly \$3 billion in deferred maintenance. The state’s CIP is meant to serve as an equalizer between wealthier local education agencies (“LEAs”) with greater capacity to contribute to capital projects, and jurisdictions like Baltimore City that lack the tax base to contribute to capital projects. My administration will continue to advocate for our fair amount of state capital dollars so that we can provide quality education in an environment befitting our most precious resource – our children.

Health

- ***Operating funds for Baltimore City’s Stabilization Center*** – In fiscal year 2017, we secured \$3.6 in state capital funding and \$2 million in federal funds to establish the city’s first-ever stabilization center (“Center”). We have requested additional state operating funds of \$10 million over five years. The Center is located at the Hebrew Orphan Asylum – 2700 Rayner Avenue – a site that had been vacant since 1989. The Center provides short-term services for persons who are under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, and it is staffed with a nurse practitioner, a licensed practical nurse and/or peer recovery specialists. The Center will divert expensive and unnecessary visits to our hospitals’ emergency rooms and will provide comprehensive wraparound services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. Since the Center’s launch in April of last year, 288 patients have been admitted, with 179 of those patients accepting referrals to further treatment upon discharge.

Public Safety

Reducing violent crime requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach and I continue to address the issue on several different fronts – proposing legislative changes; increasing employment opportunities and social services for our residents; calling for increased, definitive consequences for those convicted of serious and violent crimes; capital funding for upgrades to Baltimore Police Department (BPD) technology and aging facilities; and funding to shift BPD officers from administrative functions to active street patrol.

- ***BPD Technology Upgrades*** – \$65 million. The city has consulted with Gartner, Inc., the world’s leading IT research and advisory firm to determine the improvements needed as required by the consent decree and in accordance with the city’s technology plan. Such improvements would include: replacing mission-critical mobile radio handsets for BPD officers, eliminating reliance on paper based record keeping, software upgrades to permit data-driven operation decision making and IT performance monitoring.
- ***Additional funding for consent decree mandates*** – I have requested funding of \$4 million in operating funds – double the amount that we have received in previous years -- to assist us as we continue to implement the consent decree. We know that it will cost up to \$40 million to fully comply with all consent decree mandates.
- ***Reforming police district boundaries*** – The city has not reconsidered its police district boundaries in more than 40 years. Doing so at this time will allow us to improve the way in which resources are allocated to address crime in our neighborhoods. We must consider alignments that reflect our population change and also those areas with high incidents of violence. As we prepare for the 2020 U.S. Census, I will work with our City Council to review and propose changes to our existing police district boundaries.

Youth Opportunities

- ***YouthWorks*** -- Providing our youth with meaningful summer employment is one of my top priorities and I have been so pleased with our YouthWorks program. Although the city placed nearly 9,000 applicants, we had to turn away almost 7,000 young people. With the State’s investment we hope to be able to commit to a consistent number of summer jobs each year.
- ***Renovation of BCRP swimming pools*** -- Our city pools are very popular with our youth, and this past summer the city extended pool openings beyond Labor Day, when we experienced excessive heat. We are requesting \$1.5 million over each of the next four fiscal years so that we can make long-overdue repairs to our 18 outdoor swimming pools.

Community & Economic Development

- ***Continuing Project C.O.R.E. (Creating Opportunities for Renewal and Enterprise)*** – The state’s investment in Project C.O.R.E. is a hallmark achievement that has been critical to our community and economic development efforts. Since the Memorandum of Understanding was signed in February 2016, more than 1200 blighted units have been removed and our goal of removing 4,000 blighted properties remains. Continuing this momentum is imperative, and I am again requesting that the state extend this partnership beyond 2019 and allocate \$25 million per year through FY 2024. I am requesting also that the state provide an additional \$5 million to the current FY 2019 allocation – bringing the total to \$30 million this fiscal year -- to help us leverage the city’s new Neighborhood Impact Investment Fund. This fund will support a variety of revitalization activities, including gap financing, incentives and subsidies, as well as operating support to build the capacity of our community development and nonprofit partners.
- ***EBDI*** – Until FY 2016, the state included EBDI as part of its five-year CIP, with an annual appropriation of \$5 million. These funds were critical to acquiring and demolishing properties in the 88-acre project site and funding public infrastructure. For example, state support has been critical to completing the recently-opened Marriott Hotel -- which has created 100 permanent jobs, and in supporting the infrastructure necessary for the innovation hub at 1812 Ashland Avenue -- which will provide over 175,000 square feet of office and lab space. We are requesting that the state restore its annual \$5 million appropriation for each of the next five years, so that we can complete the infrastructure work needed to offer prepared development sites.
- ***Park Heights Infrastructure Development*** -- Park Heights remains one of my top redevelopment priorities and to date, the City has acquired 550 properties on 62 acres that represent the most blighted sections of this community. We have issued an RFP for the development of 17 acres in Park Heights, with an anticipated award date in early 2019. I am requesting \$17 million over the next five fiscal years to support the new public infrastructure that will be needed for redevelopment of this site.
- ***Enoch Pratt Branch in Park Heights*** – The Park Heights community has long advocated for a branch in their neighborhood, and a feasibility study has determined that the best location for a branch is at the site of the CC Jackson Recreation Center, for a total cost of \$18 million. We have allocated \$500,000 of local impact aid, and \$5 million of city funds over the next two fiscal years for this project. We are requesting \$12.5 million in State funding over the next two years to support this effort. (An Enoch Pratt branch also is part of our comprehensive Pimlico renovation.)

- ***Rebuilding and Expanding Ambrose Kennedy Park*** -- In 2014, the local community embarked on a series of projects to reduce violence and promote cleaning and greening activities in the Johnston Square community. One of the priorities identified was reestablishing Ambrose Kennedy Park, 1.75 acres of deteriorating open space. With city capital funds and CDBG funds we have created walking paths and new gardens and we are requesting \$6.5 million over the next five years to continue utility relocation and other infrastructure improvements.
- ***The Middle Branch Waterfront Project*** – \$1.2 million to support the cost of landscape design and engineering for the development of the Middle Branch Waterfront Vision and Implementation Plan (MBW Plan). The MBW Plan will result in a comprehensive and phased action plan to reinvent the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River. The development will improve over 11 miles of shoreline between Port Covington and Masonville Cove that is within a 20 minute walk to over 47,000 residents; create a world-class system of publically accessible parks and paths; be a model for urban living and a timeless ecological treasure for the Chesapeake region.
- ***Keeping the Preakness in Baltimore*** – The Preakness is the State’s largest single-day sporting and entertainment event and we will keep the Preakness in Baltimore. The recently released Phase II study estimates that it will cost \$424 million to make Pimlico Race Track a year-round destination for everything from youth soccer to high school proms, while simultaneously dovetailing with the my Administration’s efforts to revitalize the neighborhoods south of the track.
- ***Renovation and expansion of Baltimore City Convention Center*** – The Maryland Stadium Authority is conducting a feasibility study on the expansion of the Baltimore City Convention Center. The study should be complete in 2019, but not until after this year’s General Assembly session. We will ***not*** need to seek additional funding, but instead will request authorization to expand our bonding authority so that the MSA can proceed with actual design and construction.
- ***Repealing Crane Tax Exemption*** – The city proposes repealing the crane tax exemption legislation (HB1299) that was enacted in 2016. This law exempts cranes at our port facilities from the city’s personal property tax and it costs the city \$1.1 million annually.