



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CITY COUNCIL

MARY JO ROSSETTI
CITY COUNCILOR AT LARGE

June 23, 2020

Governor Charlie Baker
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Re: COVID-19 Stimulus Dollars for the MSBA

Dear Governor Baker,

My name is Mary Jo Rossetti, City Councilor At-Large for the City of Somerville, and I urgently write to you today as not only Councilor at Large, but also a 5-year member of our High School Building Committee to provide Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (the CARES Act) or other COVID-19 funding to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for subsequent distribution to communities with active school construction.

Construction is underway and over half complete on Somerville's new \$256 million High School, slightly less than half of which is funded by the MSBA. As I'm sure you are aware, COVID prevention safety protocols on construction sites carry additional costs for items such as sanitation, cleaning, hand wash stations, additional temporary toilets, and site security. For very large buildings, such as Somerville High School, those costs are substantial. To date, we have incurred \$222,000 and are estimating an additional \$53,000 per month in direct costs. These and other costs have exhausted the City contingency for the project and MSBA has indicated that it currently does not have funding available for COVID-related expenses.

As a densely populated, urban core community, Somerville has many competing, important needs for its municipal share of CARES funding. We cannot afford to divert that local funding to a construction site of this size and complexity, and we assume that other communities with active MSBA-funded school construction underway are in similar predicaments. Through the MSBA, which is under the umbrella of Treasurer Deborah Goldberg, communities like Somerville can afford ambitious construction projects. To complete active projects under COVID conditions, additional CARES funding through MSBA is desperately needed.

We are grateful for your strong leadership throughout this crisis, including guidance which has allowed us to safely keep the construction process moving forward in these challenging times, and hope that you agree additional funding is required to achieve those standards. Thank you again for your support and consideration. Like many other school projects supported by the MSBA, your funding would help to keep our project running as smoothly as possible, working towards the goal to deliver a 21st Century learning environment to the nearly 1,300 students in our high school community.

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Rossetti
City Councilor At Large

CC: Senator Patricia Jehlen
Representative Denise Provost
Representative Christine Barber
Representative Mike Connolly
Somerville School Committee
Treasurer Deborah Goldberg MSB