

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



Dear Miami-Dade County residents,

Since taking office in November, my top priority has been to protect lives and livelihoods and begin rebuilding a stronger, more inclusive, and more resilient Miami-Dade. We have begun to make progress over the last few months, but we have more work to do to drive forward an equitable economic recovery that truly lifts all boats. This budget cycle may prove to be unlike any other, as we navigate through the final phase of the pandemic and the unprecedented disaster in Surfside. I am enormously proud of our extraordinary response to these unprecedented events as a community and as a County family, and I have no doubt that together we can overcome any challenges we face.

To better prepare to address these and future challenges, we need to continue building trust in local government by bringing residents directly into the decision-making process. Earlier this year we launched our Thrive305 initiative – a first-of-its-kind comprehensive, community-wide engagement effort to hear directly from the people of Miami-Dade about their priorities for government. Partnering with over 80 civic groups and local and national foundations, we received direct input from tens of thousands of residents through a survey and series of in-person and virtual conversations. We also hosted a series of budget town hall meetings in February to engage the public earlier than ever before in the budget process. All this input and feedback helped us to develop the Proposed Budget which reflects our residents' priorities and will help drive an economic recovery that leaves no families behind.

Miami-Dade County has worked as hard as ever these last few months to continue protecting residents, businesses, and visitors throughout the pandemic. In December we launched our “We Can, We Will,” campaign, working with businesses, community leaders, and cities to deliver a unified message about public health precautions to slow the spread of the virus. Through the dedicated efforts of Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, Miami-Dade Police Department, and our tireless healthcare workers, we built and scaled a community-wide vaccination campaign – prioritizing vaccination for the most vulnerable including our seniors, launching mobile units to bring vaccines to all corners of the community, and knocking on over 100,000 doors in under-vaccinated neighborhoods. Thanks to these efforts, we have vaccinated over 1.8 million people and achieved a 75.6 percent vaccination rate according to the Florida Department of Health. These great milestones would not have been possible without the support of the Board and our state and federal partners.

COVID exposed and compounded deep disparities in our community and nationwide, particularly for low-wage workers who were first hit with unemployment and for Hispanic and Black families who suffered disproportionate impacts of the virus. Lack of access to childcare and housing that is affordable deepened further still during the pandemic. Minority-owned businesses were harder-hit and struggled to access relief programs. I'm proud of the swift action our community took under the leadership of the Board of County Commissioners to distribute \$474 million in CARES Act funding to maintain critical services to our community and provide much-needed relief through hardship assistance, food distribution, small business loans, and more.

The American Rescue Plan (ARPA) (H.R. 1319) presents a pivotal opportunity to continue these efforts with funding to sustain a strong long-term economic recovery. The ARPA was accepted by Congress and signed by the President on March 11, 2021. The Act provides \$1.9 trillion in response to the COVID-19 pandemic which includes fiscal recovery funds for local governments. Miami-Dade County was allocated \$527.7 million from the Department of Treasury's American Rescue Plan, Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

(CSLFRF). Miami-Dade County received a partial payment of \$263.8 million from the Treasury on May 19, 2021 and the balance of the funds will be released within twelve months of the first disbursement; the Board passed a resolution to accept those funds. In the draft plan that was sent to the Board, a projected \$321 million will be used to reimburse allowable governmental services to the extent of reductions in revenue. It is important to note that funds may not be placed in reserves, or used to pay settlements or other judgments, nor may funds be used to pay debts or fees related to issuing debt. We should take full advantage of these funds to create good-paying jobs and help residents transition to new and growing industries to support an equitable, long-term economic recovery. We should also use this opportunity to invest in expanded programs including mental health and housing to address the ongoing toll of COVID and build a healthier, more resilient community.

To protect both lives and livelihoods, we deployed \$60 million in federal relief through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program to keep tenants in their homes and provide up to a year of back rent owed to struggling landlords. Additionally, the federal government has created programs to help those hardest hit by the economic downturn and provide assistance for utilities and other critical needs. It's important to stress that history tells us that we are likely to experience delayed, ongoing effects of the economic crisis related to the pandemic in the near future – so the actions we take now in adopting this budget are extremely important to prepare for future impacts and minimize adjustments in governmental services.

Gun violence is an epidemic that the pandemic only intensified. Working in partnership with the Board of County Commissioners, community leaders, and subject-matter experts, we developed the Peace and Prosperity Plan to combat the root causes of gun violence. The plan offers a best practice-driven approach to address the gun violence epidemic through a strategic prevention, intervention, enforcement, and re-entry approach with a focus on the neighborhoods most affected, while tackling underlying social and economic disparities – targeting resources towards community revitalization needs and economic insecurity. In conjunction with this plan, the Miami-Dade Police Department kicked off Operation Summer Heat to invest in strategic enforcement efforts to curb gun violence Countywide. These plans began in FY 2020-21 and are being funded in the Proposed Budget.

In developing this year's budget, I'm proud that we were able to maintain critical services while working to enhance programs and services that support the community's economic recovery, greater public safety for all neighborhoods, partnerships with community-based organizations, and a greater focus on resiliency. The Proposed Budget also funds targeted service increases that result from the completion or acquisition of new facilities such as new fire rescue units and new library locations and extended hours.

We have a transformational opportunity not just to bring back our economy, but to rebuild stronger than ever by prioritizing investments in our residents, small businesses, and our infrastructure for future prosperity and greater resilience. This proposal will lay the groundwork as we continue to focus on growing and diversifying our economy; investing in a healthier Biscayne Bay and environment; expanding engagement with all our residents; and creating equitable opportunities for all families across Miami-Dade.

I look forward to working alongside our County Commissioners, hardworking County employees, local, state, and federal leaders, and all our residents, to turn the page to a more prosperous future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniella Levine Cava". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Daniella" being the most prominent.

Mayor Daniella Levine Cava