



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 0799-2021, **Version:** 1

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**BACKGROUND:** The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed historical inequities within our communities that have led to disproportionate rates of infection and death in communities of color. To help mitigate the disproportionate impacts of the virus for people of color and prevent widening racial health disparities going forward, it is necessary for the City of Columbus to provide targeted education and outreach to our vulnerable communities about the COVID-19 vaccine and the importance of being vaccinated. These funds will be used to enhance the City of Columbus's COVID-19 Vaccine outreach and engagement efforts and communication in our opportunity neighborhoods.

This legislation authorizes the Director of the Department of Neighborhoods to enter into a contract with Cohear Public Benefit LLC in an amount up to \$80,000 to perform outreach and engagement work, develop strategies to increase trust and reduce vaccine hesitancy, register residents for the vaccine, and to improve COVID-19 vaccination rates among vulnerable populations.

The services included in this contract cannot be provided by existing city employees because these services are beyond the City's current responsibility and capacity to provide.

Emergency action is requested to ensure that outreach to communities of color can begin immediately and vaccination rates improve as more vaccine becomes available.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Funding is provided to the City of Columbus from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed by Congress and signed into law March 27, 2020.

To authorize the Director of the Department of Neighborhoods to enter into a contract with Cohear Public Benefit LLC in an amount up to \$80,000.00 to perform outreach and engagement work, develop strategies to increase trust and reduce vaccine hesitancy, register residents for the vaccine, and improve vaccination rates among vulnerable populations; to waive the provisions of competitive bidding of Columbus City Code; and to authorize the expenditure of up to \$80,000.00 for these services starting April 1, 2021 within the CARES Act Fund; and to declare an emergency.

**WHEREAS,** the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed historical inequities within our communities; and

**WHEREAS,** COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted vulnerable populations particularly communities of color in terms of rates of infection and death; and

**WHEREAS,** to help mitigate the disproportionate impacts of the virus for vulnerable populations and prevent widening racial health disparities going forward, it is necessary for the City of Columbus to provide targeted education and outreach to our vulnerable communities about the COVID-19 vaccine and the importance of being vaccinated; and

**WHEREAS,** these funds will support the work of grassroots partners and assist the City of Columbus' efforts to educate, build trust, register residents for the vaccine, and reduce vaccine hesitancy among vulnerable communities; and

**WHEREAS,** the federal CARES Act has provided additional resources for states and cities across the Country to address community needs as a result of the COVID outbreak; and

**WHEREAS**, The Department of Neighborhoods, working in partnership with Columbus Public Health, needs to execute a purchase order before legislation to comply with the Mayor's request to partner with Cohear Public Benefit LLC for COVID-19 vaccine community outreach and registration services; and

**WHEREAS**, it is in the best interest of the City to waive the competitive bidding provisions of City Code Chapter 329 to execute a contract with Cohear Public Benefit LLC for COVID-19 vaccine community outreach and registration services in order to increase vaccination rates among vulnerable populations; and

**WHEREAS**, an emergency exists in the usual daily operation of the Department of Neighborhoods in that it is immediately necessary to authorize the Director to enter into a contract with Cohear Public Benefit LLC to perform outreach and engagement work, develop strategies to increase trust and reduce vaccine hesitancy, register residents for the vaccine, and to improve COVID-19 vaccination rates among vulnerable populations and communities of color, all for the preservation of the public health, peace, safety, and welfare; **now, therefore,**

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:**

**SECTION 1.** That the Director of the Department of Neighborhoods is hereby authorized to enter into a contract with Cohear Public Benefit LLC to allow them to begin outreach and engagement work, develop strategies to increase trust and reduce vaccine hesitancy, register residents for the vaccine, and to improve COVID-19 vaccination rates among communities of color as part of our COVID-19 response, in a total amount of up to \$80,000 with payment of expenses starting April 1, 2021.

**SECTION 2.** That the expenditure of \$80,000 or so much thereof as may be needed is hereby authorized in Fund 2207 (CARES Act Fund), Dept-Div 48-01, in object class 03 (Services) per the accounting codes in the attachment to this ordinance.

**SECTION 3.** That the funds necessary to carry out the purpose of this ordinance are hereby deemed appropriated, and the City Auditor shall establish such accounting codes as necessary.

**SECTION 4.** That the City Auditor is authorized to make any accounting changes to revise the funding source for all contracts or contract modifications associated with this legislation.

**SECTION 5.** That this Council finds it to be in the best interest of the City to waive the relevant provisions of Chapter 329 of City Code relating to Competitive bidding for this contract.

**SECTION 6.** That for the reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made part hereof, this ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its approval by the Mayor, or ten days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.