



ALABAMA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Statement from Rep. Steve Clouse
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Governor Ivey has indicated she will veto the budget we sent to her yesterday as she plans to cede full authority over COVID-19 funds to the Alabama Legislature. Her statement yesterday grossly mischaracterized our effort to share this responsibility and weigh in on behalf of our constituents as self-serving. As House Chairman of the General Fund Budget, at no point was the "wishlist" released by her office a priority for me in my discussions with Governor Ivey. I am confident I speak for most, if not all, of the Legislature in saying that doing what is most prudent for Alabamians is at the forefront of our minds.

Governor Ivey has assembled experienced and well-intended subject matter experts and utilized our state's world class healthcare professionals and resources. That expertise is indispensable, but it is neither a substitute for nor more important than the varied interests of Alabama citizens. We must increase the perspectives represented at the decision-making table.

Unlike the initial response to the virus which was aimed at the common goal of urging people to stay home, a one-size-fits-all plan to reopen the economy and prepare for a potential relapse will not work because daily life looks different across our state. Additionally, this phase of the crisis requires us to balance short term priorities with long term, proactive planning. The Governor must appreciate that reimbursing healthcare expenses, while a fundamental and major part of our response, is not the only issue we face at this stage of the pandemic.

I urge Governor Ivey to reconsider her decision to relinquish all responsibility over COVID-19 funding. Just like it would be too easy for us to defer to the Governor completely, it is counterproductive for her to shift all responsibility to us. The challenge before us is as daunting as it is complex: We must protect Alabamians from a threat we do not yet fully understand while human lives and the state's economy hang in the balance. We do not have the luxury of a power tug-of-war or political games— too much is at stake. Alabamians deserve leaders who can work together and it's time for us to step up.