Maintain Funding for USDA Rural Development Programs

**ACTION NEEDED:**
Urge your members of Congress to support U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development programs throughout the FY 2021 appropriations process by meeting or exceeding FY 2020 funding levels. USDA Rural Development programs provide critical investments in key rural county priorities.

**BACKGROUND:**
USDA programs are funded through the annual Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. USDA Rural Development operates a broad range of grant and loan programs critical to rural counties. These programs include grant funding and loan financing for water/wastewater infrastructure, community facilities, broadband, electric, telephone, housing, renewable energy and business development.

In December 2019 Congress passed and the president signed a FY 2020 spending package that included over $23 billion in total discretionary funding authority for USDA, including over $3.8 billion for USDA’s Rural Development Programs – an increase of $800 million over FY 2019 funding levels. Additionally, the package includes $555 million in appropriations for the Rural e-Connectivity Program to increase access to broadband connectivity in unserved and underserved rural communities.

Counties encourage Congress to maintain funding levels at or above FY 2020 levels as it considers appropriations for FY 2021.

Below is a breakdown of FY 2020 funding levels:

**Under the USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS):**

- **Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Programs:**
  $1.45 billion in funding for direct loans under the Water and Waste Disposal Program – $500 million above FY 2019 enacted levels – and $443 million in grants for the Water and Waste Disposal Program, an increase of $43 million over FY 2019 enacted levels. This program helps rural communities address the backlog of clean water and waste disposal projects.
• **Distance Learning, Telemedicine, and Broadband Program**: $690 million for the Rural Telecommunications Program, equal to FY 2019 enacted levels. This funding includes $87 million for the Distance Learning, Telemedicine and Broadband Program.

**Under the USDA Rural Housing Service (RHS):**

• **Rural Communities Facilities Program**: $2.8 billion for the Rural Community Facilities Program, equal to enacted FY 2019 levels. This program helps fund rural hospitals, schools, and health clinics.

• **Single-Family Housing Program**: $1 billion for the Single-Family Housing Direct Home Loans Program, equal to enacted FY 2019 funding. This program helps provide affordable housing to underserved families in rural communities.

**Under the USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS):**

• **Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program**: $65 million for the Rural Business Development Grant Program. The FY 2020 package also provided $26.6 million for Rural Cooperative Development Grants, a $2.5 million decrease from FY 2019. These programs help rural communities create and expand new markets and products through strategic investments.

**KEY TALKING POINTS:**

USDA Rural Development operates a broad range of grant and loan programs that are critical to rural counties. These programs include grant funding and loan financing for water/wastewater infrastructure, community facilities, broadband, electric, telephone, housing, renewable energy and business development.

Urge your Members of Congress to support U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development programs throughout the FY 2021 appropriations process by meeting or exceeding FY 2020 funding levels. USDA Rural Development programs provide critical investments to key rural county priorities.

For further information, contact Arthur Scott at 202.942.4230 or ascott@naco.org.
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