



January 28, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressional Leaders:

The nearly 40,000 county elected officials and more than 3 million county employees across the nation remain focused on addressing the devastating, and unfortunately, enduring impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including through our county public health officials, health care providers, public safety personnel and other essential frontline leaders. As this unprecedented global health pandemic continues to evolve and reach further into our communities, **we urge your bipartisan support and immediate passage of the local government aid outlined in the President's American Rescue Plan.**

We want to acknowledge the invaluable aid that our federal partners have already provided in previous bills. These resources were invested prudently in our local public health mitigation and response, such as PPE, testing and contact tracing, for essential workers and the public. As part of our local community services, counties also concentrated on service gaps for our most vulnerable residents and small businesses, especially the basic nutrition and shelter needs of our seniors, youth, sick and unemployed. Broadband access for school children and remote workers, along with job placement and workforce training for the unemployed, remain other areas of significant focus. Unfortunately, far too many counties never received any, or very limited, federal resources, based on statutory population thresholds and state sub-allocation decisions. Unfortunately, the pressing challenges and needs facing our counties continue to outstrip our local resources.

Even with these much-appreciated federal dollars, the immense scale and growing needs facing our counties are far outstripping our local resources. While most of the federal dialogue has focused on the outlook of state and local revenues, it is important to recognize the historic community and resident needs that are far beyond normal times. This unprecedented pandemic has killed more than 400,000 Americans, dislocated a record number of workers, crushed countless small businesses, and impacted our children's learning and growth. In most places, it has also stretched, beyond our wildest imaginations, county resources and services for public health, substance abuse and mental health, child protective care, coroners and medical examiners, housing, food and nutrition, and broadband access. In response, county officials have dug into local financial reserves, reallocated local resources, and have made hard decisions to cut non-essential services and staff to stay afloat during these difficult times.

County leaders are serious, prudent stewards of public dollars. We remain very concerned about mounting federal debt. Yet, we also understand that we must overcome this devastating pandemic together, now, so we can make the smart investments needed to pursue a brighter, more resilient future for all our residents and communities. As Henry Kissinger asserted, “The historic challenge for leaders is to manage the crisis while building the future.”

As important ground-level partners in our nation’s intergovernmental system, county leaders are not looking for an unlimited federal handout. We support coordinating a stronger federal-state-local framework that ensures federal resources are invested appropriately, with a strategic focus on COVID-19 impacts and future community resiliency. We embrace robust public accountability and transparency standards, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss any necessary safeguards.

We know that the only way to unlock the full economic potential and protect the wellbeing of the nation is to overcome the current global public health emergency. Our immediate charge remains to help mitigate the COVID-19 virus, keep our local businesses alive, and serve our most vulnerable residents and frontline heroes. County leaders are also faithful to the American tradition of building back better after a major national crisis. The reality is that this will take additional federal investments that leverage and supplement the local efforts of our counties and local tax base.

We respectfully urge Congress and the White House to work together in a bipartisan manner to ensure our county leaders – and our local communities – have the resources, decision-making powers and flexibility necessary to overcome this massive national emergency and to ensure our nation is better prepared for future pandemics and disasters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew D. Chase". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "M".

Matthew D. Chase
CEO/Executive Director