April 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

As you consider the next COVID-19 (coronavirus) relief package, we write to urge you to support dedicated and robust funding for county governments of all sizes across the country. Across America, Counties operate nearly 1,000 public hospitals, 1,900 local public health departments, more than 800 long-term care facilities, and 750 behavioral health departments, and are responsible for other essential functions including emergency operations centers, human services, jail management, 911 services, veterans' services, coroners, and medical examiners. Through these services, our counties act as our nation's front-line of defense in the response to the coronavirus pandemic.

However, the current public health crisis has put a significant strain on the budgets of our counties. Today our county governments are not only dealing with an unprecedented uptick in the demand for essential services but are doing so during an unprecedented economic downturn that has caused considerable hardship and growing shortfalls in tax revenue. These realities place a strain on the budgets of our counties at a time when our constituents need their support the most. Moving forward, we must empower our local governments with greater flexibility to spend federal relief dollars as they see fit, including to help make up for the loss of expected tax revenues or other unexpected budget shortfalls.

While the funding provided through the Coronavirus Relief Fund in the *CARES Act* was an important first step in getting much needed relief to our localities, the additional stipulation that only localities of over 500,000 residents would receive direct funding makes it difficult for counties to know much of their state's allocation will be available for their needs.

We are particularly concerned that smaller and more rural counties—which need to continue operating their hospitals, emergency response centers, and more—receive adequate resources to successfully address the needs of their residents. As such, we urge you to disburse funding directly to localities to ensure that these allocations more closely reflect the special role and critical responsibilities of county governments of *all sizes* during this public health crisis. We thank you for your leadership during this crisis and thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

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Abigail D. Spanberger Member of Congress