



May 22, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer,

As representatives of America's county governments, we are writing today to respectfully urge your bipartisan support and cooperation for a new round of direct, flexible aid for local governments of all sizes. We also offer our support for public accountability safeguards that preserve the needs of local officials to address the broad range of community, economic, health and safety impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are grateful for the swift, bipartisan action on earlier supplemental aid packages. Most notably, these previous efforts calmed specific segments of the municipal bond market, focused on immediate public health and safety net services, and provided targeted cost reimbursement and assistance for specific county operations. We are also grateful for the direct aid that the bipartisan *CARES Act* sent to our largest counties. **Under the *CARES Act*, however, less than five percent of the nation's counties were eligible for direct assistance through the Coronavirus Relief Fund.**

Meanwhile, according to new National Association of Counties (NACo) research, America's counties face a combined \$144 billion fiscal impact from the COVID-19 pandemic through FY2021, without considering potential declines in property tax revenues and cuts in state aid for mandated services.

Alarming, new Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows a loss of more than 800,000 jobs in the local government sector – 332,000 of which were non-education related jobs ranging from law enforcement officers to healthcare practitioners, social workers, maintenance crews, construction workers, administrative support and more. Local governments need these public servants to keep our communities safe, and we need federal aid to assist us in bringing these people back to work.

Looking ahead, several proposals have been introduced that would address the immediate needs of local governments across the country. The *HEROES Act* (H.R. 6800), as passed by the House, would allocate \$187.5 billion in direct, flexible relief to counties of all sizes based on population. This funding could be used both for the tremendous public health expenditures and the catastrophic losses in county revenue. We support this approach. The bipartisan *Direct Support for Communities Act* (S. 3632, H.R. 6748) uses a similar formula, and would also provide direct funding to all of America's counties. We are thankful for the bipartisan group of House and Senate members led by Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi that have championed this method of providing relief to local governments.

Serving Americans every day at the local level is a non-partisan undertaking, and what America's local governments need right now is a bipartisan solution to address the enormous economic and public health challenge that COVID-19 has presented. We are encouraged by and grateful for the bipartisan *SMART Act*, introduced in the Senate by Sens. Cassidy and Menendez, as it would provide \$80 billion in flexible funding to counties of all sizes.

Our nation's counties are truly on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. Counties operate and support over 1,900 local public health departments, nearly 1,000 public hospitals and critical access clinics, more than 800 long-term care facilities and 750 behavioral health centers. County governments are also responsible for emergency operations centers and public safety, housing and homelessness services, court and jail management, protective services for children, seniors and veterans, and the "last of the first responders" with coroners and medical examiners.

Additionally, counties play a major role in assisting local businesses, from permitting and records management to transportation and infrastructure to small business lending and technical assistance. Without additional aid, these services vital to the American economy will remain hampered, slowing our recovery.

We thank you again for your leadership during these historically challenging times and ask you to come together to provide critically needed resources to help us respond to this crisis.

Sincerely,

National Association of Counties
Association of County Commissions of Alabama
Alaska Municipal League
Arizona Association of Counties
Arizona County Supervisors Association
Association of Arkansas Counties
California State Association of Counties
Colorado Counties, Inc.
Florida Association of Counties
Association of County Commissioners of Georgia
Hawai'i State Association of Counties
Idaho Association of Counties
Illinois State Association of Counties
United Counties Council of Illinois
Association of Indiana Counties
Iowa State Association of Counties
Kansas Association of Counties
Kentucky Association of Counties
Police Jury Association of Louisiana
Maine County Commissioners Association
Maryland Association of Counties
Michigan Association of Counties
Association of Minnesota Counties
Mississippi Association of Supervisors
Missouri Association of Counties

Montana Association of Counties
Nebraska Association of County Officials
Nevada Association of Counties
New Jersey Association of Counties
New Mexico Association of Counties
New York State Association of Counties
North Carolina Association of County Commissioners
North Dakota Association of Counties
County Commissioners Association of Ohio
Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma
Association of Oregon Counties
County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania
South Carolina Association of Counties
South Dakota Association of County Commissioners
Tennessee County Services Association
County Officials Association of Tennessee
Texas Association of Counties
Utah Association of Counties
Virginia Association of Counties
Washington State Association of Counties
Washington Association of County Officials
Wisconsin Counties Association
County Commissioners' Association of West Virginia
West Virginia Association of Counties