

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 13, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell,

We write to you as a group of senators who represent states that are in serious need of immediate financial assistance at the state, county, and local levels. We ask that you support the funding amount for State and Local governments that was included in the HEROES Act, including \$500 billion for States, \$375 billion for Local governments and \$20 billion each for territories and tribal lands. We also ask that you work with us to provide both significant new funding to state and local governments struggling to pay their first responders, as well as flexibility in the use of those funds.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created sudden revenue shortfalls that state and local governments could not have foreseen. A recent survey found that 96% of municipalities anticipate budget shortfalls this year due to precipitous revenue decreases caused by the COVID-19 response. In most cases, states are restrained by constitutionally-mandated balanced budgets. Without additional revenue, state, county, and local governments will have no choice but to fire or furlough many of their more than 20 million employees. Since February, state and local governments have cut a total of 1.5 million jobs, an 8% drop that is twice the decline seen during and after the 2007-09 recession. Forcing millions of people out of their jobs will further strain an already reeling economy, inflate the unemployment rolls, and eliminate the essential services these employees provide.

We seek significant new resources to reinforce the work of state and local governments. Providing additional funds to state and local governments will ensure that jurisdictions have the financial resources to fund first responders, and the life-saving work done in our public hospitals and by public health departments in communities large and small. Existing funding is not enough for jurisdictions grappling with these extraordinary shortfalls. Governors of both parties may be forced to balance their budgets by cutting education funding for thousands of school districts and slashing funding to support the millions of Americans who reside in nursing homes or receive care in home and community-based settings. At least 44,000 deaths caused by COVID-19 were among nursing home residents and workers in nursing homes and other long-term care settings, representing more than 40% of deaths nationwide. It is essential that the federal government provide fiscal support for those who are responding directly to and are most affected by this unprecedented health and economic crisis.

In addition, state and local governments require flexibility in the application of funds, both in the funding already provided in the CARES Act, and in any new funds provided going forward. As mentioned, jurisdictions are facing drastic revenue shortfalls, which are anticipated to worsen throughout the duration of the health crisis. Yet the money provided by the CARES Act may not be spent to replace lost revenue, which is a restriction that is neither intended nor required by the CARES Act. To stabilize these budgets and to ensure jurisdictions have the resources necessary to battle the virus and provide the services the American people rely on, more flexibility is essential so that jurisdictions can use money wherever it is most needed.

The COVID-19 crisis has devastated communities throughout the United States. The country needs you to act decisively and quickly to ensure that locally-funded first responders, educators and health care providers across the nation can continue to provide assistance to respond to this crisis, sustain local economies and support families living with the fear and uncertainty created by this unprecedented public health emergency.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

/s/

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

/s/

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

/s/

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/s/

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

/s/

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

/s/

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

/s/

Mazie Hirono
United States Senator

/s/

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

/s/

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

/s/

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

/s/

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/

Tina Smith
United States Senator

/s/

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

/s/

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

/s/

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

/s/

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

/s/

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

/s/

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/

Doug Jones
United States Senator

/s/

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

/s/

Jack Reed
United States Senator

/s/

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

/s/

Tom Udall
United States Senator