



The Board of Chosen Freeholders County of Hunterdon State of New Jersey

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Shaun C. Van Doren, Director
Susan J. Soloway, Deputy Director

April 24, 2020

J. Matthew Holt, Freeholder
John E. Lanza, Freeholder
Zach Rich, Freeholder

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell, and Leader Schumer,

We, the undersigned county officials in the 7th Congressional District of New Jersey, implore you to provide desperately needed funding for local governments, regardless of population size, in the next emergency coronavirus package.

Without targeted stabilization funding, our towns will be unable to continue providing critical services to our residents. New Jersey's 7th Congressional District contains no localities with a population of or above 500,000 and are therefore ineligible for assistance under existing stimulus programs (in fact, we have no municipality with more than 50,000 residents). Our counties and towns have faced enormous costs while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, including rapid activation and expansion of emergency services, transitioning to telework to ensure continuity of county government and services, overtime for first responders, testing kits, personal protective equipment, and more.

The coronavirus pandemic has not only increased costs for local governments, but as a result of necessary, life-saving steps to contain the spread, it has also contributed to a precipitous decline in municipal revenue streams, including but not limited to: property taxes, court fees, parking fees, energy tax receipts, UCC fees, and hotel occupancy fees. The combination of lower revenues and higher expenses is compounded by New Jersey's requirement that municipalities and counties balance our budgets. As a result, small towns in New Jersey will be forced to slash essential services, including public schools, police and fire departments, furlough or layoff municipal employees, or raise taxes on already overburdened residents.

We strongly urge you to include in any future Coronavirus relief package, H.R. 6467, a bi-partisan bill with 140 co-sponsors, which would provide \$250 billion in stabilization funds to localities with populations lower than 500,000. Under the Coronavirus Community Relief Act, state and local governments with a population under 500,000 would be eligible for support to cover expenses attributable to the COVID-19 epidemic, including lost revenue.

We support this legislation and similar efforts that allow all municipal and county governments to seek assistance regardless of population size. We cannot rely on our state government, which is facing similar revenue shortfalls and increased expenses, to pass federal relief funds to municipalities. Only the federal government has the capacity to help states and local governments of all sizes from falling off a budgetary cliff.

Without your support for this proposal or others like it, our towns will find it increasingly difficult to slow the spread of COVID-19 and to implement responsible economic recovery initiatives. Small town America has been hit just as hard economically during this crisis as our metropolitan areas. It should receive proportionately the same level of relief.

Attached for your consideration are some individual testimonies from Mayors and County officials across New Jersey's 7th Congressional District, detailing the unique burdens that managing a responsible COVID-19 response has placed on our municipal budgets.

Sincerely,



Shaun C. Van Doren
Director



Susan J. Soloway
Deputy Director



J. Matt Holt
Freeholder



John E. Lanza
Freeholder



Zach T. Rich
Freeholder