

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 20, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We appreciate the steps you took to declare a nationwide emergency pursuant to Sec. 501(b) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 5121-5207 (the “Stafford Act”). We also appreciate the approval of major disaster declaration requests pursuant to the emergency declaration by 50 U.S. states, tribes, and territories. We agree that the severity and magnitude of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has the potential to cause severe consequences for our country’s national and economic security. Given the unprecedented nature of this pandemic, we urge you to eliminate the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) non-Federal cost share currently required under these declarations to help state, local, tribal and territorial governments fight this global pandemic.

Since your initial nationwide emergency declaration, the number of positive cases has grown rapidly. Our nation now leads the world in confirmed COVID-19 cases. We worry the worst has yet to come. It is vital the federal government leverage the full weight of its resources to allow state, local, tribal and territorial governments to dedicate their limited resources to outbreak response efforts in their fight against the spread of COVID-19. Increasing the federal cost share of FEMA public assistance provides much-needed relief in additional federal assistance for state, local, tribal and territorial governments. Our request empowers those entities to focus their limited resources on containing and mitigating the virus.

Raising the federal cost share is not unprecedented and within your authority under Sec. 501(b) of the Stafford Act, which states “... the primary responsibility for response rests with the United States because... the United States exercises exclusive or preeminent responsibility and authority.” This authority has been invoked in times of past national crises. The federal portion of FEMA public assistance cost share has also been adjusted during the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the devastating flooding in Louisiana in 2016, and the aftermath of Hurricane Irma in 2017. As our entire country faces the daunting challenge of defeating this global pandemic, the full capacity of the federal government needs to be used so those on the front lines can focus on saving lives and protect our most vulnerable populations.

Thank you very much for your attention to our request to help our state, local, tribal and territorial governments. It is an important and urgently needed step that will help our nation combat this global pandemic.

Sincerely,



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



John Rutherford
Member of Congress

Additional Signatories Include:

Representative Peter A. DeFazio
Representative Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Representative Colin Allred
Representative Joyce Beatty
Representative Ami Bera, M.D.
Representative Earl Blumenauer
Representative Anthony Brindisi
Representative Anthony G. Brown
Representative Julia Brownley
Representative Cheri Bustos
Representative G. K. Butterfield
Representative Salud Carbajal
Representative Tony Cárdenas
Representative André Carson
Representative Ed Case
Representative Sean Casten
Representative Kathy Castor
Representative Judy Chu
Representative David Cicilline
Representative Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Representative Katherine Clark
Representative Yvette D. Clarke
Representative Wm. Lacy Clay
Representative Emanuel Cleaver, II
Representative Steve Cohen
Representative Gerald E. Connolly
Representative Jim Cooper
Representative Joe Courtney
Representative Angie Craig
Representative Charlie Crist
Representative Jason Crow

Representative Sharice L. Davids
Representative Danny K. Davis
Representative Madeleine Dean
Representative Diana DeGette
Representative Rosa L. DeLauro
Representative Suzan DelBene
Representative Val Butler Demings
Representative Ted Deutch
Representative Debbie Dingell
Representative Mike Doyle
Representative Eliot L. Engel
Representative Veronica Escobar
Representative Anna G. Eshoo
Representative Adriano Espaillat
Representative Dwight Evans
Representative Brian Fitzpatrick
Representative Lizzie Fletcher
Representative Bill Foster
Representative Marcia L. Fudge
Representative Tulsi Gabbard
Representative Ruben Gallego
Representative John Garamendi
Representative Sylvia R. Garcia
Representative Jimmy Gomez
Representative Vicente Gonzalez
Representative Josh Gottheimer
Representative Al Green
Representative Raúl M. Grijalva
Representative Deb Haaland
Representative Alcee L. Hastings
Representative Jahana Hayes

Representative Denny Heck
Representative Brian Higgins
Representative Jim Himes
Representative Steven Horsford
Representative Chrissy Houlahan
Representative Jared Huffman
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Representative Filemon Vela
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Representative Maxine Waters
Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman
Representative Peter Welch
Representative Frederica S. Wilson
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