

Congress of the United States

March 24, 2020

Dear President Trump:

In response to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic currently facing our country, on March 13, 2020, you issued a nationwide Emergency declaration pursuant to section 501(b) of the *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act* (Stafford Act, P.L. 93-288, as amended). Additionally, you encouraged states to request Major Disaster declarations, which you have subsequently approved or are in the process of reviewing for various states. However, while the aforementioned Stafford Act declarations are critical in providing Federal assistance to states, local, tribal and territorial (SLTT) governments, the current 25 percent cost share threatens the public health response and fiscal stability of our SLTT partners on the frontlines of the coronavirus outbreak. We write to urge you to eliminate the non-Federal cost share currently required under these declarations.

The declarations you have issued authorize SLTT governments to take emergency protective measures to respond to the pandemic and be reimbursed under Category B of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance (PA) program. Per Stafford, the assistance from FEMA is to be provided at a 75 percent Federal cost share.

Given the unprecedented nature of this pandemic, SLTT governments will not be able to shoulder the 25 percent cost share under the PA program. We urge you to increase the Federal support and eliminate the non-Federal cost entirely. Such a cost share adjustment will enable SLTT partners to dedicate essential resources to outbreak response efforts. An increase in the Federal cost share is warranted given the magnitude of the threat facing the nation and your own invocation of section 501(b), which states "... the primary responsibility for response rests with the United States because... the United States exercises exclusive or preeminent responsibility and authority."

FEMA plays a vital role in this nation's response to the outbreak. Your declarations under the Stafford Act represent an important step toward mobilizing the needed resources to combat the outbreak and eliminating the non-Federal cost share for SLTT partners will ensure the full weight of the Federal government is assisting with response to this pandemic. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Alison Northrop with the Committee on Homeland Security at Alison.Northrop@mail.house.gov and Aaron Davis with the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure at Aaron.Davis@mail.house.gov.

Thank you for your prompt attention to the matter.

Sincerely,

Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security

Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness,
Response, and Recovery
Committee on Homeland Security

Peter A. DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and
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Dina Titus
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