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 Sharice L. Davids
Representative Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Representative Danny K. Davis
Representative Colin Allred  
Representative Madeleine Dean
Representative Joyce Beatty  
Representative Diana DeGette
Representative Ami Bera, M.D.  
Representative Rosa L. DeLauro
Representative Earl Blumenauer  
Representative Suzan DelBene
Representative Anthony Brindisi  
Representative Val Butler Demings
Representative Anthony G. Brown  
Representative Ted Deutch
Representative Julia Brownley  
Representative Debbie Dingell
Representative Cheri Bustos  
Representative Mike Doyle
Representative G. K. Butterfield  
Representative Eliot L. Engel
Representative Salud Carbajal  
Representative Veronica Escobar
Representative Tony Cárdenas  
Representative Anna G. Eshoo
Representative André Carson  
Representative Adriano Espaillat
Representative Ed Case  
Representative Dwight Evans
Representative Sean Casten  
Representative Brian Fitzpatrick
Representative Kathy Castor  
Representative Lizzie Fletcher
Representative Judy Chu  
Representative Bill Foster
Representative David Cicilline  
Representative Marcia L. Fudge
Representative Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.  
Representative Tulsi Gabbard
Representative Katherine Clark  
Representative Ruben Gallego
Representative Yvette D. Clarke  
Representative John Garamendi
Representative Wm. Lacy Clay  
Representative Sylvia R. Garcia
Representative Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Representative Jimmy Gomez
Representative Steve Cohen  
Representative Vicente Gonzalez
Representative Gerald E. Connolly  
Representative Josh Gottheimer
Representative Jim Cooper  
Representative Al Green
Representative Joe Courtney  
Representative Raúl M. Grijalva
Representative Angie Craig  
Representative Deb Haaland
Representative Charlie Crist  
Representative Alcee L. Hastings
Representative Jason Crow  
Representative Jahana Hayes
Representative Denny Heck
Representative Brian Higgins
Representative Jim Himes
Representative Steven Horsford
Representative Chrissy Houlahan
Representative Jared Huffman
Representative Sheila Jackson Lee
Representative Pramila Jayapal
Representative Hakeem Jeffries
Representative Henry C. “Hank” Johnson, Jr.
Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson
Representative Marcy Kaptur
Representative William Keating
Representative Robin L. Kelly
Representative Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Representative Daniel T. Kildee
Representative Derek Kilmer
Representative Andy Kim
Representative Raja Krishnamoorthi
Representative Conor Lamb
Representative James R. Langevin
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Representative Barbara Lee
Representative Susie Lee
Representative Andy Levin
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Representative Daniel W. Lipinski
Representative Zoe Lofgren
Representative Alan Lowenthal
Representative Nita Lowey
Representative Ben Ray Luján
Representative Stephen F. Lynch
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Representative Carolyn B. Maloney
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Representative A. Donald McEachin
Representative James P. McGovern
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Representative Grace Meng
Representative Joseph D. Morelle
Representative Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
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Representative Jerrold Nadler
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Representative Joe Neguse
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Representative Aumua Amata Radewagen
Representative Jamie Raskin
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Representative Cedric L. Richmond
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Representative Harley Rouda
Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard
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Representative C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Representative Bobby L. Rush
Representative Tim Ryan
Representative Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Representative Michael F.Q. San Nicolas
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Representative John P. Sarbanes
Representative Jan Schakowsky
Representative Adam B. Schiff
Representative Bradley S. Schneider
Representative Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Representative David Scott
Representative José E. Serrano
Representative Donna E. Shalala
Representative Brad Sherman
Representative Mikie Sherrill
Representative Albio Sires
Representative Elissa Slotkin
Representative Adam Smith
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Representative Rashida Tlaib
Representative Paul D. Tonko
Representative Norma J. Torres
Representative Xochitl Torres Small
Representative David Trone
Representative Lauren Underwood
Representative Juan Vargas
Representative Filemon Vela
Representative Nydia M. Velazquez
Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Representative Maxine Waters
Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman
Representative Peter Welch
Representative Frederica S. Wilson
Representative John Yarmuth