



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

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CEO and Executive Director
TOM COCHRAN

April 2, 2020

The Honorable Steve Mnuchin
Secretary of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Mnuchin,

As the COVID 19 pandemic continues to spread across our country with tragic loss of life and unprecedented economic fallout, The U.S. Conference of Mayors stands ready to assist you and the Treasury Department in the critical implementation of the CARES Act. We especially encourage the immediate implementation of the State and Local Assistance Fund and distribution of such funds as quickly as possible directly to eligible cities.

Mayors and this Conference have a long and productive working relationship with the department under your leadership. We look forward to continuing that relationship as we implement the CARES Act and work together on future legislative proposals to respond to the coronavirus. Therefore, we offer these recommendations to help cities under the CARES Act to respond to the pandemic's daunting challenges.

We encourage the department to use the latest available Census data for determining state and local jurisdictional population, as required by the law. Our strong preference is the use of 2019 Census data as it reflects the most current population figures, assuming it is sufficiently available. If not, the 2018 data should be used. Cities that fall just under the eligibility threshold that can clearly demonstrate subsequent population growth that puts them above the threshold, should receive direct funding. We look forward to working with you to ensure that eligible cities, many of which are "hot spots," receive their funds directly from Treasury and within the next few weeks.

We support the approach to determine first the population of cities, then counties, in calculating each jurisdiction's population for purposes of allocating funds.

We also request that cities be given ample flexibility in the use of funds in the context of city budgets in which expenditures are directly tied to available revenues and balanced budgets are mandated. As budgeted revenues decrease as a result of COVID 19's health impacts and its negative impact on the economy, previously budgeted expenditures that provide essential public services are jeopardized at a time when they are most needed. We believe restoring these revenue shortfalls by maintaining and/or expanding expenditures for essential services must be seen in tandem and deemed eligible expenses. This is critical to our ability to respond to the COVID 19 pandemic.

As cities expend funds to address the crisis, it is important that the broad set of expenses to mitigate negative effects of the pandemic on the public be included as eligible assistance, including essential public services, such as police, fire and emergency response, environmental protection, technology, public and mental health, and sanitation, among others.

To respond to the pandemic and maintain stable public order, health and safety, it is critical that our cities maintain a strong level of service to our citizens, especially as “safe at home” policies remain in place and as the gradual recovery process begins. Creating this stable environment will encourage the general public to abide by public orders of sheltering and “return to work” policies to prevent the further spread of COVID 19. This long process will no doubt put burdensome mental and economic strains on our people, and it is important that we remain capable of providing services to meet human needs during the short and long-term effects of the pandemic.

Finally, the U.S. Conference of Mayors endorses the letter from Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and Mesa Mayor John Giles and co-signed by other active USCM members submitted to you on April 2, 2020.

We thank you for your work on the CARES Act during this national crisis and look forward to our future discussions.

Sincerely,



Bryan K. Barnett
Mayor of Rochester Hills, MI
President



Greg Fischer
Mayor of Louisville, KY
Vice President



Nan Whaley
Mayor of Dayton, OH
Second Vice President



Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director