



April 20, 2020

The Honorable Cheri Bustos
United States House of Representatives
1233 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Bustos:

As a group of bi-partisan mayors representing 1.2 million people of Illinois, we are reaching out to you in plain and simple terms: **WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

As you well know, COVID-19 continues to wreak public health and economic havoc on our communities. We thank you for working hard to develop legislation to help our businesses stay economically viable during this pandemic. The relief funding you secured for higher education, public transit, small businesses and other parts of our communities will be vital to our recovery. We also applaud you for the work you have done to distribute timely stimulus checks to our residents.

In that spirit, as leaders of cities from throughout Illinois with 75,000+ residents, we write collectively to urge you to fight for flexible direct funding to municipalities to help limit the crippling economic damage to our cities as a result of this global pandemic.

We are in unprecedented times. Municipal governments are already facing mounting financial pressure that will only increase in coming weeks and months. Some of the largest cities in Illinois are forecasting devastating losses that will impact their citizens for decades:

- The Village of Arlington Heights, the 13th largest municipality in Illinois, projects an \$8.3 Million reduction in sales and income tax revenues in 2020.
- The City of Aurora, the second largest city in Illinois, has already identified \$28 million in revenue losses due to income taxes and sales taxes from shuttered facilities such as the Hollywood Casino, Paramount Theater, River Edge Park, Chicago Premium Outlet Mall and Fox Valley Mall.
- The City of Bloomington, the 10th largest city in Illinois, estimates revenue losses of at least \$8 million.



- Bolingbrook has shifted over the years from a property based budget to more of a sales tax based budget. Sales tax alone along with numerous other COVID-19 driven revenue shortfalls is costing us an estimate \$10 million for March, April and May alone!
- In Champaign, the move to online learning through the summer term by the University of Illinois along with cancellations of large events like the Illinois Marathon will have an unprecedented impact on our economy. The City of Champaign's major revenues are currently estimated to decrease by at least \$11 million dollars if the stay at home order ends this month if it continues that number will rise.
- The City of Joliet, the third largest city in the state of Illinois has seen revenues fall between 70-80%. From the riverboats alone, the City of Joliet is losing \$300,000 a week in revenue.
- The City of Naperville, the fourth largest city in Illinois estimates an \$18 million loss of revenue due to reduced sales and income tax revenue.
- Peoria estimates that local sources of revenue will decline \$20.4 million, and state sources of revenue decline \$10.6 million if the economy opens up May 1. It gets significantly worse after that date.
- The City of Rockford, the fourth largest city in Illinois, estimates approximately \$14 million in lost income and sales tax revenue.
- City of Waukegan, ninth largest city in Illinois and county seat of Lake County, estimates approximately \$10 million in lost revenue due to the coronavirus.

Collectively, these mid-sized cities in Illinois stand to lose \$120 million in revenue.

Without question, we need help, immediately.

Without immediate relief, these cities will likely be forced to cut public safety workers such as police and fire in order stay afloat. **We cannot, and should not, have to lay off the very same first responders who are now fighting on the front lines against COVID-19 when this pandemic subsides.** This is simply not acceptable.



Laying off police officers will jeopardize the progress many of our communities have made to reduce crime and keep residents safe. Laying off firefighters and paramedics will greatly impact emergency access to healthcare.

The crisis also threatens other essential services. For example, our water systems, which require ongoing upgrades and maintenance to deliver clean, safe and affordable water, could be in danger without adequate funding.

If the pandemic closures continue and businesses remain closed, all cities depending on how their various affected revenue sources are budgeted and spent will have no choice but to consider also reducing critical capital projects and cutting funding to vital community not-for-profits.

Combined, our cities will regress in ways that are unimaginable.

To make matters worse, without assistance, many municipalities will have little choice but to increase property taxes in order preserve critical functions. This will only compound the problems we are facing. Illinois's property taxes are already among the highest in the nation. We cannot ask property tax payers to shoulder this burden alone.

These are real-life scenarios that will weaken our cities in the short-term and devastate them in the long term. Make no mistake: lives are at risk. From Rockford in the north to Springfield in the south, our cities drive public safety and economic growth in our respective regions. And our cities are leading the regional response to this global COVID-19 crisis. We respectfully urge you to join our fight by passing legislation that provides municipalities with direct flexible funding. We are uniquely situated to deploy these funds quickly and efficiently where they are needed most.

It is our understanding that there is a debate among legislators as to whether Congress should assist small business, the health care industry, or cities that provide essential services. This is not an either/or proposition. The answer should be yes to all three. We are in an extraordinary economic and public health crisis. We are thankful to have bold leaders in our federal delegation who will rise to the challenge.

We appreciate your help in this serious endeavor. We are grateful for everything you are doing to help our residents during these challenging times. Thank you for your continued service to our region.



Sincerely,

Thomas P. McNamara
Mayor, City of Rockford

Jim Ardis
Mayor, City of Peoria

Steve Chirico
Mayor, City of Naperville

Roger C. Claar
Mayor, Village of Bolingbrook

Sam D. Cunningham
Mayor, City of Waukegan

Deborah Frank Feinen
Mayor, City of Champaign

Thomas W. Hayes
Mayor, Village of Arlington Heights

Richard C. Irvin
Mayor, City of Aurora

Bob O'Dekirk
Mayor, City of Joliet

Tari Renner
Mayor, City of Bloomington

Julie Moore Wolfe
Mayor, City of Decatur