



July 10, 2020

The Honorable U.S. Senator Rob Portman

448 Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Portman:

Thank you for your leadership in addressing many of the challenges that our country is facing from the continuous spread of the novel coronavirus. We recognize the work that Congress has done to provide critical supports for businesses through the Paycheck Protection Program and the additional supports for unemployed workers. We also want to acknowledge the initial efforts to help state and local governments with COVID-related expenses through the CARES Act.

However, as this virus continues to threaten the health and wellbeing of our communities, more must be done to mitigate the fallout from this once-in-a-generation crisis. One critical step that Congress can take right now is to provide immediate emergency assistance to state and local governments. Doing so will sustain our frontline workers responding to this pandemic, provide budget stability for state and local governments, and allow our communities to better support the private sector as we work to re-open our economy safely and effectively.

As you know, Ohio has received \$4.5 billion in CARES Act Funds. An estimated \$800 million went directly to communities with populations over 500,000. Another \$1.2 billion was intended for Ohio's remaining local governments and \$2.5 billion is to be utilized by Ohio state government. To date, the state has allocated \$350 million to Ohio's counties, cities, villages, and townships that fall under the population cap noted above. These funds are currently being used to address the initial and immediate expenses that local communities have incurred responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The U.S. Treasury Guidance outlines a number of uses for these funds, but it expressly prohibits the one use that is the most critical for communities in every corner of the state – revenue replacement to help stabilize local budgets. The economic downturn brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has affected every community in Ohio, even those that haven't yet seen a significant increase in cases or hospitalizations.

Furthermore, these funds are required to be utilized before the end of the calendar year while the impacts of the virus are likely to extend well beyond that timeframe.

If these restrictions remain and Congress does not allocate additional emergency fiscal assistance to state and local governments, communities across Ohio will be forced to deal with very serious budgetary consequences. To be clear, even if Congress gives state and local governments the flexibility to use the money that’s already been allocated, that will not be enough to address our challenges. That is because 1) the total allocation of these funds will not completely address the budgetary shortfalls that many communities are facing; and 2) this ongoing crisis will continue to impact economic activity in our communities throughout this year and into next.

Now more than ever a robust, flexible emergency federal assistance package for state and local governments is critical to a safe, strong, and swift recovery. We hope we can count on your support and determined advocacy with your leadership team to help make this essential aid package a reality for Ohio’s local governments.

Respectfully submitted,

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