

March 16, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Leahy:

On behalf of local governments and their grantees and elected and appointed officials, the following associations appreciate your assistance in addressing COVID-19 by implementing the following request.

As COVID-19 spreads across the nation, local governments need more resources and federal flexibility to address the virus and its impact on low and moderate-income communities. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program is a valuable resource and tool being used by local governments to battle COVID-19. This letter requests an increase in CDBG program funding and a temporary suspension of the program's public services cap.

We urge you to increase funding for the CDBG program to assist communities in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic now. The CDBG program is well targeted to low- and moderate-income areas that need these funds. This pandemic is not localized to one or two areas, but nationwide. Given the potential impact of the virus, relief will have to move quickly and the CDBG program provides the infrastructure to do so.

We also urge you to authorize an emergency suspension of the 15% cap on CDBG public services and allow flexibility in the use of the funds to assist in the COVID-19 pandemic. This will enable grantees to reprogram unspent funds towards critical social services (i.e., health services, food pantries, senior meals programs) and short-term rental assistance to help stave off evictions and assist people impacted by the massive slowdown that will occur in local economies.

We also urge you to encourage the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide grantees with regulatory flexibility to ensure CDBG and other HUD funds are disbursed and implemented quickly and effectively to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

We thank you for your consideration of our request. Please feel free to contact Vicki Watson, Executive Director, National Community Development Association at vwatson@ncdaonline.org or 540-656-9552 with any questions.

Sincerely,

The National Community Development Association

The National Community Development Association is a bi-partisan national organization comprised of nearly 500 local governments across the country that administer federally supported affordable housing, economic development, homelessness assistance, and community development programs, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.

The National League of Cities

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the voice of America's 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 200 million people; and is a resource and advocate for the nation's cities and their leaders.

U.S. Conference of Mayors

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official non-partisan organization of cities with a population of 30,000 or larger. Each city is represented by its chief elected official, the mayor.

National Association of Counties

Founded in 1935, the National Association of Counties is the only national organization that represents America's 3,069 county governments. Counties play a fundamental role in helping ensure the health and well-being of residents.

Council of State Community Development Agencies

The Council of State Community Development Agencies represents state housing and community development agencies responsible for administering federal affordable housing, community development, and homeless assistance programs through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

National Association for County Community and Economic Development

The National Association for County Community and Economic Development represents county government practitioners that administer federally funded affordable housing, community development, and economic development programs benefiting low- and moderate-income households.