

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 22, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write to urge you to waive all cost-share requirements for the emergency declarations declared on March 13, 2020 and any subsequent major disaster declarations for all states, tribes, territories, and the District of Columbia for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.¹ By invoking Section 501(b) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Act), you acknowledged the federal government’s preeminent role in the response to COVID-19. That Act states a President may use certain authorities to provide assistance “...when he determines that an emergency exists for which the primary responsibility for response rests with the United States, because the emergency involves a subject area for which, under the Constitution or laws of the United States, the United States exercises exclusive or preeminent responsibility and authority.”² Unfortunately, the pandemic has only worsened since mid-March, and state governments are spending millions to prevent, contain, and mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, putting their financial stability at risk.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is authorized to increase the federal cost-share to 100 percent for emergency work, including direct federal assistance. With over 825,000 cases and 45,000 deaths in the United States, the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 response stretches beyond the capabilities of the states and warrants the full resources and support of the federal government. According to the National Governors Association, many states are already reporting precipitous declines in revenues that fund state services for health care, education, public safety, transportation, and other vital programs.³ Simultaneously, many states have also been forced to appropriate millions of dollars of emergency funding to augment their response, putting them in an even more precarious fiscal position.⁴ Our nation’s governors are calling for robust support from the federal government as they navigate the response to this pandemic.

¹ Federal Emergency Management Agency, *COVID-19 Emergency Declaration Factsheet* (Mar. 13, 2020) (HQ-20-017-FactSheet) (<https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2020/03/13/covid-19-emergency-declaration>).

² Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Pub. L. No. 93-288.


³ National Governors Association, *Governors’ Letter Regarding COVID-19 Aid Request* (Apr. 21, 2020) (<https://www.nga.org/policy-communications/letters-nga/governors-letter-regarding-covid-19-aid-request>).

⁴ National Conference of State Legislatures, *State Fiscal Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19)* (<https://www.ncsl.org/research/fiscal-policy/state-fiscal-responses-to-covid-19.aspx>) (Apr. 21, 2020).

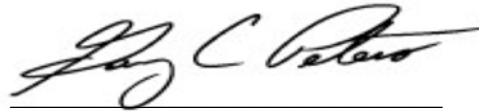
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We urge you to swiftly direct the Administrator of FEMA to increase the federal cost-share for sections 502 or 403 of the Act to 100% for the emergency declaration issued on March 13, 2020, pursuant to section 501(b) of the Act, and any subsequent major disaster declaration under section 401 that supersedes such emergency declaration. This will ensure residents and business owners in communities across the nation have the resources they need to address this pandemic. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Peter A. DeFazio
Chair
House Transportation and
Infrastructure Committee



Gary C. Peters
Ranking Member
Senate Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs Committee

cc: The Honorable Peter T. Gaynor, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency