



March 23, 2020

Honorable US Senator Michael Bennet
Honorable US Senator Cory Gardner
Honorable US Congressman Joe Neguse
Honorable US Congressman Ken Buck
Honorable US Congressman Jason Crow
Honorable US Congresswoman Diane DeGette
Honorable US Congressman Scott Tipton
Honorable US Congressman Doug Lamborn
Honorable US Congressman Ed Perlmutter

Dear Honorable Senators and Congressman of Colorado:,,

We are writing today to express our appreciation for what you have accomplished in your first two COVID-19 legislative packages to help our nation. But we also write to express our extreme concern over the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the capacities of local and county governments to address the health and safety of their own citizens. Because the emergency is straining the resources of all governments and health organizations, those with symptoms are asked to self-isolate in their homes and stay away from hospitals and clinics until their condition is desperate. During that time, they fearfully turn to their county governments for help. In response we are mobilizing to bring patients food and supplies to allow them to stay isolated. Our county staffs have now been completely rededicated to the emergency and are working long hours to also plan and prepare for what is to come.

When the patients' condition finally does become desperate, it is our local paramedics and EMT's who are asked to transport them in that condition. They courageously will, but in small, rural communities we have few emergency medical crews and public health nurses to respond. And as they become exposed, go off-line and are isolated themselves, we risk seeing our response capacity drop quickly to zero. As a result, we are seeking furloughed medical staff to fill the gap, at great cost. Because testing and PPE stocks are scarce and being rapidly depleted, we are turning to private resources to fill that gap and are still forced to reserve what few tests and PPE's we can find for our responders, leaving none for patients. We critically need those supplies for the vulnerable among us, the sick and the heroes who serve them.

Therefore, as you turn to a third legislative package, we strongly urge you to include the following items most critical to America's counties:



- **Strengthen the Local Health Care Safety Net:** We urge you to repeal or delay the statutory Medicaid disproportionate share hospital (DSH) payment reductions scheduled to take effect on May 23, 2020. As the local health care system works to provide care for infected residents regardless of socioeconomic status, Medicaid DSH payments are a critical means for local hospitals to serve our nation's most vulnerable citizens, by enabling them to make up for those losses and continue to provide high-quality care to all patients.
- **Deploy More Testing Equipment:** Counties need sustained federal investments and flexibility at the local level to help us protect our residents from the spread of this virus and lessen the impact of this pandemic on our local communities. Local governments cannot adequately respond to the threat of the virus without the essential tools required to measure the spread of the disease in our communities. The shortage of test availability, and the lack of testing has contributed to a false sense of security in states and counties where there are currently no reported cases. We urge Congress to increase the availability of testing materials, and grant flexibility to state and local governments so that we can quickly identify and treat individuals impacted by COVID-19. Furthermore, counties request that any future legislative packages include adequate funding to address lab capacity issues and provide adequate technical support and equipment to meet growing demands for testing.
- **Access and Distribution of Personal Protective Equipment for Essential County Service Providers:** As COVID-19 continues to spread throughout our country, the protection of our local service providers is crucial. Without adequate equipment needed to prevent personal contamination, local health care professionals cannot administer tests and treat infected individuals. In highly impacted areas, counties have seen a spike of local service provider infections, and in some cases, providers have refused to provide services due to the lack of protective equipment. We request additional personal protective equipment for both county and private facilities be made available to preserve the health and safety of these essential employees when their services are needed most.
- **Provide Guidance on How Counties Can Access FEMA's Public Assistance Program Funding, and Provide Clarity Around Eligible Activities and Necessary Documentation for Reimbursement:** Counties are struggling to understand how the president's emergency declaration will affect our COVID-19 response activities. We know that that \$42 billion is now available under FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund, as part of the Public Assistance Program, however \$41 billion of this amount is only available to local governments and eligible nonprofits IF the governor requests, and the president declares a major federal disaster declaration for the state.
- **Clarify Tax Credits for Paid Sick and Paid Family and Medical Leave for County Employers:** Paid leave is a significant challenge for county governments who employ over 3.6 million, or one percent, of all Americans. While we appreciate that H.R. 6201 expands paid leave benefits for workers affected by COVID-19, the legislation imposes substantial new sick leave and family medical leave requirements on government employers of all sizes. Counties request that Section 70001(d)(4) and Section 7003(d)(4) be removed from H.R. 6201 and



language is inserted to clarify that state and local government employers fully qualify for both credits

Sincerely,

CLEAR CREEK BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Randall Wheelock, Chairman
Sean C. Wood, Commissioner
George Marlin, Commissioner