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April 21, 2020

The Honorable Bob Casey
393 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Casey,

On behalf of Centre County thank you for your leadership during this critical time and your efforts to address the significant health, safety and economic impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

As Congress negotiates a potential fourth COVID-19 response package, we urge you to provide direct and flexible funding to county governments of all sizes who are at ground-zero of this unprecedented public health and economic crisis.

In Pennsylvania, counties are responsible for emergency operations centers, human services, correctional facilities, 9-1-1 services, veterans' services and the "last of the first responders" with coroners, among many other essential county functions. Given our role at the front lines of this crisis, we strongly urge you to allocate resources directly to counties as Pennsylvania mandates the implementation of emergency response responsibilities to county governments.

While the CARES Act (P.L. 116-136) provided $150 billion for unanticipated expenditures for states and local governments, counties with populations below 500,000 are not eligible for direct funding and are instead at the mercy of the state – who are dealing with their own fiscal pressures. Even a significant subset of major urban counties that are eligible for direct assistance under the Coronavirus Relief Fund will now see combined reductions of $5.1 billion under the U.S. Treasury's guidance because many must now subtract city populations within their county boundaries, despite the fact that these counties are mandated to provide critical public health functions for their entire geographic area.

Given the unique county role of counties in our nation's emergency operations, human services, and overall community response to this pandemic, we again respectfully urge you to support efforts to allocate resources directly to counties. We further urge you not to use the outdated CDBG formula for the allocation of funds to local governments.

We thank you again for your leadership during these unprecedented times. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further with your team and are committed to a solution that helps our nation mitigate, respond and recover from these historic times.

Sincerely,

CENTRE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Michael Pipe, Chair

Mark Higgins

Steven G. Dershem