April 13, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232 United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support Direct Federal COVID-19 Pandemic Assistance to Small Cities

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

As the Mayor of the City of Beverly Hills, California, I respectfully urge Congress to ensure small to medium sized localities are eligible for direct federal stabilization funds under the next COVID-19 relief package. The recently enacted Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act limits direct federal payments to cities with populations of more than 500,000, effectively handicapping the wherewithal of frontline smaller municipalities to sustain critical pandemic related services and overcome the prolonged shutdown of their respective economies.

Congress and President Trump’s administration have rightly focused much of their relief programs on providing financial lifelines to individuals, families, and small and large businesses. However, thousands of municipalities across the nation have been left out of the federal equation and desperately need assistance in weathering this pandemic. As local governmental entities, we are working hand-in-hand with our public and private sector partners. We are also leveraging every resource at our disposal in tackling this unprecedented public health threat as well as the commercial challenges posed by the coronavirus.

Beverly Hills has mobilized our police and fire/EMS personnel in our pandemic response as well as our Community Services, Public Works, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, and Community Development Departments in meeting the multifaceted needs of our residents during this precarious period. For instance, we have undertaken ongoing community outreach to the City’s senior population through various modes of communication to match their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Moreover, City staff members and/or community volunteers provide human contact to our most vulnerable populations through phone calls, delivery of food, medicine, toiletries, goods, and supplies.
Additionally, we are working with local Red Cross leadership to explore hosting community blood drives utilizing our City’s Community Centers, while ensuring safe social distancing protocols in an effort to address blood supply shortages at our regional hospitals.

In the CARES Act, cities with populations over 500,000 received direct funding for their COVID-19 efforts. Only six cities in California, and one in Los Angeles County, have a population of over 500,000 residents. In Los Angeles County, 51 of the 88 cities have a population of less than 50,000 and in the state of California, 311 of the 482 cities have a population of less than 50,000. It is important to realize that sixty-one percent of the population of the United States lives in communities with less than 50,000 residents. These residents are not likely to benefit from direct relief under the CARES Act. Additionally, these smaller cities are oftentimes less financially able to withstand the financial shortfalls of a nearly frozen economy and will require direct finance assistance to continue to provide much needed public safety services to their community.

As you work with your congressional colleagues to craft the next COVID relief bill, the City of Beverly Hills joins the National League of Cities and the U.S. Conference of Mayors in urging Congress to include direct stabilization funding to localities with populations under half a million people. Unfortunately, cities are experiencing a precipitous drop in revenue affecting every level of government while normal operations including social services, housing supports, and public safety are becoming more difficult and costly to operate. A post-pandemic economic recovery cannot fully materialize without healthy cities, both large and small. I believe this provision is critical to assist smaller cities survive the severe decline in revenue caused by this pandemic.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lester J. Friedman
Mayor, City of Beverly Hills