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MAGAZINE

VIRGINIA TOWN & CITY

April 7, 2020

Dear [Member of Congress],

I am writing on behalf of the cities, towns and counties who make up the Virginia Municipal League to thank you for your efforts in passing the CARE Act. Your leadership is important for local governments across Virginia as we struggle to continue providing essential health and safety services for Virginians during these unprecedented times. We recognize and appreciate all that you have done.

We have two issues to share with you. The first concerns distribution from the Coronavirus Relief Fund under Title IV of the Cares Act. The federal statute stipulates that only local governments with a population greater than 500,000 are eligible to directly receive federal relief from this fund. We believe this threshold has the unintended effect of harming Virginia's cities, all of whom are independent from their surrounding counties and thus ensuring that only one locality (Fairfax County) can qualify. We ask that "independent cities" or metropolitan areas be added in the authorizing federal statute or in federal guidelines as a qualifying category of local government to receive funds under Title IV and any future federal economic stimulus funds.

We believe that direct funding for more of Virginia's larger localities will put the federal dollars to work more quickly than waiting for the state to play its role as a "middle-man." This idea is based on the allocation formula used in the federal Community Development Block Grant Program. Reducing barriers to accessing funds will provide a desperately needed level of certainty for city governments and employees who are delivering critical services today while local and state revenues shrink and critical service demands increase.

The second issue is flexibility. Providing more flexibility in legislation or in the implementing guidelines on program administration and eligible spending purposes will help to target federal dollars to our communities' highest priority needs.

Again, we appreciate your leadership during these uncertain times and look forward to working with you and your staff on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Michelle Gowdy, Executive Director
Virginia Municipal League

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