

ALBANY CALIFORNIA



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February 23, 2021

The Honorable Congresswoman Barbara Lee
U.S. House of Representatives
2470 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for Federal Relief Package for Cities

Dear Congresswoman Lee:

The City of Albany writes today to offer our strong endorsement of the budget reconciliation language providing \$350 billion in direct and flexible aid for our states, cities, counties, tribes, and territories. We encourage the U.S. House of Representatives to swiftly pass this urgently needed aid and distribute it to cities immediately.

Our country's economic crisis from the pandemic is not over, and our cities are still waiting to receive meaningful levels of federal aid. By separating, and ultimately dropping, state and local aid from the omnibus appropriations and emergency spending bill in December, Congress has injected significant uncertainty into the capability of local governments to carry out their operations, just as a third wave of COVID-19 infections threatened to spread uncontrollably.

[Based on the most recently available fiscal data and updated survey results from the National League of Cities, municipal governments nationwide are facing a \\$90 billion shortfall to their current year revenues.](#)

For nearly a year, California cities have been on the front lines taking action to protect their residents and maintain the delivery of essential city services, despite the substantial unplanned expenses and revenue shortfalls caused by the pandemic. Cities are managing resources to support the efforts of first responders, coordinating regionally with other leaders across jurisdictional lines, enacting difficult and fiscally challenging emergency measures to slow the coronavirus epidemic, passing ordinances to limit the worst economic outcomes for residents and small businesses on the margins, and spending as necessary to protect public health and the economy in this extraordinary time.

The City of Albany acted quickly to adopt an urgency ordinance placing a temporary moratorium on commercial and residential foreclosures, evictions and rent increases. In addition, the City of Albany adopted an urgency ordinance to establish a temporary limit on the charges imposed by third-party delivery services on retail food establishments during the local declared state of emergency resulting from the COVID-19 Pandemic. The City of Albany also has established a high service program for our

most vulnerable residents, delivery meals and groceries to seniors in need. The City of Albany has also successfully assisted 37 people experiencing homelessness find secure shelter in local motels as well as working to help these individuals find secure longer term housing and services.

At the same time, the still urgent, unmet need for federal aid has struck at the heart of local capacity to both carry out emergency response and participate in economic recovery. Without support, cities have been forced to cut budgets, services, and jobs. Sadly, across the state, more than 165,000 local government jobs have already been lost during the pandemic. The City of Albany continues to see significant loss in sales tax revenue and other revenue streams due to the pandemic which have resulted in budget deficits.

Without additional emergency funding in appropriate, fair, and equitable allocations for all cities, counties, and states, a preventable setback to response, recovery, and vaccination distribution, will be unavoidable. We urge you to maintain the following provisions in the reconciliation bill to reverse the fiscal shortfalls resulting from the pandemic:

- Emergency funding should be fair and appropriate for each and every local government, with no minimum population threshold for eligibility.
- Aid should be directly allocated through familiar and proven government revenue sharing programs.
- Entanglement of state and local funding should be minimized.

To be clear, our cities are not asking for a “bail-out” of local governments. Rather, we are seeking an emergency lifeline so local governments can delay and ultimately avoid making temporary cuts permanent at a time when our communities need local services most, laying-off furloughed city and county employees who comprise a large share of America’s middle class, and indefinitely cancelling capital projects that will further impact economic recovery.

Ultimately, we are seeking emergency federal assistance that will ensure local leaders are part of the solution to our country’s economic recovery.

We appreciate the thoughtful work of the drafting committees to ensure that aid to our states, cities, counties, tribes, and territories will be distributed fairly, so communities of all sizes can receive the help they need. As the House and Senate consider this legislation we ask that you maintain the \$350 billion fund that will get aid quickly to all corners of the country including your constituents.

Sincerely,



Ge'Nell Gary
Mayor
City of Albany

Cc: Sam Caygill, East Bay Division, League of California Cities, scaygill@cacities.org
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