



April 17, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Federal Funds to California Counties

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of California’s 58 counties, we appreciate the partnership we have been able to strengthen with you during the course of your Administration, and specifically, during the course of the crisis we are all now facing together. Surely, California’s initial success at “bending the curve” is attributable to your leadership and our strong state-county partnership model, the hard work of counties and county staff at the local level, and the good people of this great state. While our nonstop efforts to save lives and protect communities are ongoing, counties are also now grappling with significant economic uncertainties that threaten our ability to provide core services to all Californians.

Counties are at the front lines of California’s response to COVID-19, from public health departments leading the community health response, to nurses, doctors, and paramedics leading the emergency medical response, to probation departments providing vital services to reentry and pre-trial populations, to sheriffs who protect public safety and health, to social workers securing hotel rooms for those experiencing homelessness, to eligibility workers who ensure that the millions of suddenly unemployed Californians can access the medical care, food assistance, and financial resources they need. While other levels of government and some industry sectors are providing invaluable community assistance, in California, counties and our dedicated county employees are leading the charge in the fight against COVID-19. **As a result, it is vital that as federal emergency funding for the COVID-19 pandemic begins to flow to local governments, both directly and through the state, that it is allocated based on direct service responsibilities for local pandemic response.** The California safety net system is almost entirely delivered by counties and is under immense strain as we take all measures to support those impacted by COVID-19.

California is eligible for \$15.3 billion from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) to be shared between the state and local governments, with funding for local governments capped at 45 percent of the state's overall amount. Counties seek continued conversations with your Administration about how to allocate the remaining amount of the local government funding in the CRF in a manner that reflects the roles and responsibilities that counties have in the pandemic response. In addition, we are working hard with our colleagues across the nation on additional efforts to secure robust, dedicated, and flexible funding for all local governments being negotiated in Congress now. These funds are essential to keep our county emergency operations centers, human services, behavioral health, probation, coroners, 911 services, jail management, and public health workers functioning during the prolonged response and recovery.

While counties are ready to partner with your Administration to find solutions to our state financial crisis, these federal funds are critical to keeping our safety net in place and stable during this public health crisis. With that said, it has come to our attention that some cities are requesting that more federal funds be diverted from critical county services to instead go to cities to address their significant revenue losses.

It is evident that all of local government is struggling right now. However, we cannot afford to move critical federal funding away from public health and emergency response. As counties see the drop in revenues dedicated to 1991 realignment, 2011 realignment, and Proposition 172, and the effect those declines will have on the public health, human services, behavioral health, and public safety programs they fund, we need to ensure that the federal CARES Act funding and any additional federal dollars come to counties to keep these essential services in place so that the state's safety net continues to reflect our California values.

Counties' role in the pandemic is to act as an extension of state government and, as a result, we want to continue to work in partnership with your Administration through this public health and economic crisis to ensure that we have the necessary resources to keep Californians safe and healthy.

Cc: The Honorable Toni Atkins, Senate President pro Tempore
The Honorable Anthony Rendon, Speaker of the Assembly
The Honorable Holly Mitchell, Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
The Honorable Phil Ting, Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
Keely Bosler, Director, California Department of Finance