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April 17, 2020

Dear Georgia Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of the undersigned County Chairs representing all 159 Georgia county governments, we 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 Georgia, county governments have been, and remain, on the front line in direct response to the COVID-19 emergency, such as supporting county health departments and authority-owned hospitals, funding and equipping of first responders and other public safety officials, conducting emergency management operations, maintaining critical infrastructure, increased funding for coroners/medical examiners and indigent burial and addressing the needs of seniors citizens, homeless and our jail population. Local governments are also incurring significant overtime costs for essential workers, especially among our public safety and public health employees, due to the increased demand for their services and a shortage of available staff as a result of increased sick leave from exposures or illness.

At the same time as these increased service and financial demands, county governments (like the state and federal government) are likely to soon see substantial revenue losses, particularly from lower sales tax collections due to the dramatic and ongoing downturn in economic activity.

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. Only four of Georgia's most populous counties (Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton & Gwinnett Counties) have access to direct federal funding.

Given the unique county role of counties in our nation's public health 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 CDBG formula for the allocation of funds to local governments. Under the context of the COVID-19 public health and overall economic crisis, we strongly urge you to develop a more balanced allocation method.

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, state and local governments mitigate, respond and recover from these historic times.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Chairs of the Counties of Georgia

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