



April 21, 2020

Honorable Jane Kitchel, Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Dear Chairperson Kitchel:

I am writing to you on behalf of Vermont's 246 cities and towns, which are all members of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. Cities and towns are in dire straits in Vermont as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, even as they are called on to ensure the delivery of emergency services to constituents while their revenues plunge. There are approximately 5,800 municipal employees in the state of Vermont. At the same time that law enforcement, parks maintenance, highway repair, wastewater and water supply infrastructure needs are most critical, municipalities find themselves laying off or furloughing employees.

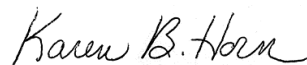
Direct federal aid to local governments that may be used to cover lost revenues resulting from this public health emergency and the faltering economy is unlikely to be forthcoming in the next aid package, despite the work of Vermont's Congressional delegation. FEMA funding available to Vermont as a result of Emergency Declaration EM-3437-VT offers assistance, however significant requirements must be met in order to qualify. The CARES Act provides no dedicated funding to municipalities whose populations are less than 500,000.

We do not know yet what the costs will be for COVID-19-related responses at the municipal level. We *do* know that they will be substantial, and we are working to develop estimates of the need. Without your assistance, property owners across the state, who pay for most municipal services and K-12 education, will be at tremendous financial risk. We need your assurance that assistance will be available to cities and towns to recover costs incurred in working to combat the pandemic, as well as complying with executive orders from both the federal and state governments.

In an April 17 letter to U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell and U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, Senator Sanders wrote, "... it is essential that you include robust, dedicated, and flexible funding to all units of state and local government in the next interim emergency coronavirus package to support their ongoing efforts in the fight against this pandemic. Not only are these public servants on the front line of the immediate response effort, they are also major employers navigating unprecedented declines in revenues just as the need for their services hits an all-time high."

We look forward to providing you with estimates of local governments' lost revenues and their needs to cover the costs imposed by this pandemic. We strongly urge you to dedicate monies from the \$1.25 billion CARES Act's Coronavirus Relief Fund for direct relief to local government.

Sincerely,


Karen B. Horn, Director
Public Policy & Advocacy