

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0520

April 10, 2020

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Mnuchin:

As the U.S. Department of Treasury (Treasury) makes disbursements from State and Local Government Coronavirus Relief Fund (Relief Fund), we urge Treasury to recognize Joint Powers Authorities (JPAs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) as eligible units of local governments.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act created a \$150 billion relief fund for state, local, and tribal governments. The CARES Act states that local governments are only eligible for funding if their populations exceed 500,000, leaving out many smaller counties and cities who would otherwise have to rely on aid from their state. There is no requirement in CARES for states to pass on this funding to smaller localities.

Many smaller localities, however, should be eligible for this funding through their JPOs and Federally mandated MPOs that they have established with neighboring cities and counties. The CARES Act makes clear that this funding is not limited to just cities and states, stating that an eligible “unit of local government” is defined as a “county, municipality, town, township, village, parish, borough, **or other unit of general government** below the State level with a population that exceeds 500,000.” The reference to “other unit of general government” would include JPAs and MPOs.

JPAs and MPOs form essential units of government by exercising powers jointly. JPAs may make housing funding allocations for the entire JPA, and MPOs make transportation planning, programming and policy decision including transit planning and operation for all in the organization as designated by the U.S. Department of Transportation. MPOs specifically serve as forums for regional decision-making, building consensus, strategic planning, and housing resource allocation. Their boards consist of elected members from all cities and counties within the jurisdiction and act together to make decisions that affect their combined populations equally, as a unit of government.

Local governments are facing increased pressure to provide critical public resources to protect the health, mobility, and economic security of their citizens, supporting the first responders on

the front lines executing COVID-19 preparedness through police, fire, and emergency services. At the same time, they are facing sharply declining general tax and hospitality industry-related revenues, and little flexibility to take on debt. A direct allocation to a regional JPA or MPO assures that the funding designated for local governments gets most quickly to where it can do the most good.

It is imperative that JPAs and MPOs are permitted to apply for and receive funds through the Relief Fund. Thank you for your consideration of this vitally important issue during these trying times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JP', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress