March 4, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
S-128, U.S Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
S-128, U.S Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senate Leaders:

In response to the ongoing global outbreak of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and the developing threat to our cities, the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) strongly urges swift and immediate passage of an emergency supplemental appropriation to expand and strengthen state and local capacity and coordination to adequately prevent, prepare, respond, recover, and mitigate this infectious disease occurrence. Specifically, we urge that any final supplemental request include:

• In excess of $6 billion dollars for a nationwide response – including a $2 billion set aside to reimburse states and localities directly for uncompensated care and to safeguard our communities from this developing threat. Eligible activities for reimbursement should allow for maximum local flexibility, and may include, but not be limited to obtaining and maintaining quarantines, isolation housing, staffing, providing wrap around food, health and/or human services, emergency communications, transportation, acquisition of personal protective equipment (PPE), and other infectious control equipment and supplies. Additionally, funding is needed to enhance and maintain laboratory capacity, epidemiology, data analytics, public health surveillance and emergency operations to address this threat.

• Clear guidance and decision tools must be instituted and shared by the Administration or key federal agency for the revision and update of screening protocols for incoming travelers from elevated CDC advisory levels.
• Funding must be provided to CDC for expediting the local deployment of test kits to cities nationwide to ensure the rapid detection, investigation and treatment of new cases.

• Utilize federal authority to increase production of N-95 masks and other essential prophylactic equipment.

• And upon the development of a vaccine, protections must be enacted into public law to ensure cities and individuals are provided with an adequate stockpile of inoculation supplies at minimum cost.

These recommendations above are not an exhaustive list but highlight just some of the many and immediate concerns and cost burdens that will inhibit state and local capacity and coordination to adequately halt and mitigate this current outbreak. Thus, it is essential that emergency funding be enacted and signed quickly into law.

Lastly, any emergency funding should not be used to offset or cut funding for existing public health, public safety, disaster or emergency operations funding to state and local agencies. Moreover, existing programs and grants from which funds are diverted or transferred to respond to the COVID-19 threat should be replenished as well.

Mayors look forward to working in close collaboration with Congress to address this developing threat that has the potential to negatively impact our cities, and disrupt families, businesses, and our local economies. For additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Dalen Harris, Assistant Executive Director at the US Conference of Mayors at 202-861-6707 or email dharris@usmayors.org.

Sincerely,

Bryan K. Barnett
Mayor of Rochester Hills, MI
President, The U.S. Conference of Mayors

Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director
The U.S. Conference of Mayors

cc: The United States Senate