

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

To Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

As you develop the third tranche of support and relief to our communities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we ask that you remember the unique needs of rural communities. As you know, 60 million people – or one in five Americans – live in rural America. Rural counties make up nearly 85 percent of the 1,104 “older-age counties”—those with more than 20 percent of their population age 65 or older.

We have already seen the devastating economic effects of this pandemic. Unfortunately, our rural communities may see a disproportionate result of this economic downturn. A recent study found that rural communities were already facing challenges before this pandemic swept our country. Rural communities see higher poverty rates, have a lower population in the working age, a higher portion of the population are on disability, and, in some places, educational attainment lags behind other areas.

The folks in our rural communities are hardworking and ready to get back to work, but they will not be able to do so without significant assistance. We respectfully ask that you remember the needs of these constituents as you develop economic support and growth programs. It may take rural communities longer to make up for current losses and to rebuild to pre-pandemic levels. We appreciate any flexibility that can be built into programs and carve-outs for the special needs of rural communities.

We appreciate how difficult the task is ahead of you, but trust that you will put the needs of everyone in America first – including those of our rural communities.

Sincerely,

MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress

VICENTE GONZALEZ
Member of Congress

PETER WELCH
Member of Congress

TERRI A. SEWELL
Member of Congress

TJ COX
Member of Congress

JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress

JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress

RAUL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress

ANTHONY BRINDISI
Member of Congress

AUSTIN SCOTT
Member of Congress

JAMES P. McGOVERN
Member of Congress

CINDY AXNE
Member of Congress

JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress

ANGIE CRAIG
Member of Congress

JIMMY PANETTA
Member of Congress

CHERI BUSTOS
Member of Congress

JOSEPH P. KENNEDY, III
Member of Congress

STEVEN HORSFORD
Member of Congress

CHELLIE PINGREE
Member of Congress

RON KIND
Member of Congress

GLENN "GT" THOMPSON
Member of Congress

DAVID SCOTT
Member of Congress

G. K. BUTTERFIELD
Member of Congress

JOE NEGUSE
Member of Congress

EMANUEL CLEAVER, II
Member of Congress

DAVID TRONE
Member of Congress

ABIGAIL D. SPANBERGER
Member of Congress

SHEILA JACKSON LEE
Member of Congress

ROSA L. DeLAURO
Member of Congress

SANFORD BISHOP
Member of Congress

SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress

FILEMON VELA
Member of Congress

LAUREN UNDERWOOD
Member of Congress

ELAINE G. LURIA
Member of Congress

MARK POCAN
Member of Congress

LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER
Member of Congress

LARRY BUCSHON
Member of Congress

SUSIE LEE
Member of Congress

DANNY K. DAVIS
Member of Congress

PETER DeFAZIO
Member of Congress

TOM MALINOWSKI
Member of Congress

ZOE LOFGREN
Member of Congress

JENNIFER WEXTON
Member of Congress

JIM COSTA
Member of Congress

BEN RAY LUJAN
Member of Congress

ELISSA SLOTKIN
Member of Congress

TULSI GABBARD
Member of Congress

ROGER MARSHALL
Member of Congress

ANN KIRKPATRICK
Member of Congress

DARREN SOTO
Member of Congress

NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ
Member of Congress