March 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Speaker  Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives  U.S. Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader  Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives  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
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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. VELEZQUEZ  
Member of Congress