April 9, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As Members of Congress who spend substantial periods of time with our families, staffs and colleagues in the District of Columbia, and as United States Representatives who must take into account the basic needs and interests of 705,000 federal tax-paying American citizens who live in the District yet have no representation in the U.S. Senate and whose own elected representative to the House is denied a vote, we write to express our outrage about the decision to shortchange the District of hundreds of millions of dollars in urgently needed relief under the $2.2 trillion COVID-19 legislation that was recently signed into law.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) includes direct aid to states to help them respond to the many public health and economic challenges posed by the coronavirus outbreak. But the allocation formula for these direct grants inexplicably breaks from overwhelming precedent and treats the District of Columbia like a federal territory rather than a state, meaning that it will receive about $500 million rather than the $1.25 billion minimum allotted to the states. The District will lose out on $750 million in essential funding during this crisis.

This decision is a scandalous departure from practice that dramatically increases health risks for everyone who lives and works in the District, a massive group that includes Members of Congress, our Capitol Hill staffs and our families.

The District of Columbia is home to 705,000 people, a population larger than that of two states, and its citizens pay more in federal tax dollars than people in 22 states. District residents pay the same federal taxes as state residents, which is why the District has been treated like a state under almost all federal grant programs—and not like U.S. territories, whose citizens do not pay individual federal income taxes (although they do pay other kinds of federal taxes).

There is no principled reason to abandon the customary practice of grouping the District with the states when it comes to the state aid grants in the CARES Act, and there are urgently compelling public health reasons to correct this affront to the local community. The District of Columbia is treating more than 1,400 COVID-19 cases and has already seen 28 deaths in the community. Its caseload is growing sharply along with those in neighboring Maryland and Virginia and the rest of the country.
The District is doing its part to fight the spread of the virus, but its economy has been hard hit by the necessary closures of many of the city’s business, governmental and tourist sites. As the Nation’s Capital, the city where we meet, where essential government functions are located, and where millions of our constituents travel every year, the District’s ability to meet the full economic and health needs of its population will have direct consequences for the wellbeing of our own constituents, our communities and ourselves. We are one nation and there is no reason to cheat the people of the District, who actually pay more per capita in federal taxes than the people of any state.

We appreciate that Speaker Pelosi has already pledged to fight for retroactive full COVID-19 funding for the District. We hope this will become a unifying, bipartisan and bicameral point of agreement which demonstrates our commitment to the unity of the American people and that it can be enacted as soon as possible.

Very truly yours,

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Additional Cosigners:

Rep. Alma S. Adams
Rep. Nanette Diaz Barragán
Rep. Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Rep. Earl Blumenauer
Rep. Suzanne Bonamici
Rep. Anthony G. Brown
Rep. Julia Brownley
Rep. André Carson
Rep. Kathy Castor
Rep. Judy Chu
Rep. Yvette D. Clarke
Rep. Emanuel Cleaver
Rep. Gerald E. Connolly
Rep. Jim Costa
Rep. Henry Cuellar
Rep. Danny K. Davis
Rep. Diana DeGette
Rep. Rosa L. DeLauro
Rep. Val Butler Demings
Rep. Theodore E. Deutch
Rep. Debbie Dingell
Rep. Eliot L. Engel
Rep. Anna G. Eshoo
Rep. Adriano Espaillat
Rep. Dwight Evans
Rep. Marcia L. Fudge
Rep. Jesús G. “Chuy” García
Rep. Sylvia R. Garcia
Rep. Jimmy Gomez
Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva
Rep. Debra A. Haaland
Rep. Alcee L. Hastings
Rep. Jahana Hayes
Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee
Rep. Pramila Jayapal
Rep. Hakeem S. Jeffries
Rep. Marcy Kaptur
Rep. Robin L. Kelly
Rep. Ro Khanna
Rep. John B. Larson
Rep. Brenda L. Lawrence
Rep. Barbara Lee
Rep. Ted Lieu
Rep. Alan S. Lowenthal
Rep. Stephen F. Lynch
Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney
Rep. Betty McCollum
Rep. A. Donald McEachin
Rep. Gregory W. Meeks
Rep. Grace Meng
Rep. Gwen Moore
Rep. Seth Moulton
Rep. Jerrold Nadler
Rep. Grace F. Napolitano
Rep. Joe Neguse
Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Rep. Ilhan Omar
Rep. Scott H. Peters
Del. Stacy E. Plaskett
Rep. Mark Pocan
Rep. Ayanna Pressley
Rep. Mike Quigley
Rep. Cedric L. Richmond
Rep. Bobby L. Rush
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Del. Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Rep. Linda T. Sánchez
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Rep. Janice D. Schakowsky
Rep. Bradley S. Schneider
Rep. Terry A. Sewell
Rep. Donna E. Shalala
Rep. Brad Sherman
Rep. Adam Smith
Rep. Darren Soto
Rep. Thomas R. Suozzi
Rep. Bennie G. Thompson
Rep. Rashida Tlaib
Rep. David J. Trone
Rep. Lauren Underwood
Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez
Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman
Rep. Peter Welch
Rep. Jennifer Wexton
Rep. Susan Wild
Rep. John A. Yarmuth