April 27, 2020

The Honorable Steve Stivers  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2234 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Troy Balderson  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1221 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joyce Beatty  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2303 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Stivers, Beatty, and Balderson:

On behalf of the local government leadership representing the two million residents of Central Ohio, we thank you for your leadership and offer our sincere thanks for all of your efforts at the federal level to address the public health and economic crisis associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) and the Central Ohio Mayors and Managers Association represent the cities, counties, villages and townships in the Columbus area. Local governments are tasked with the most fundamental responsibility of ensuring the public health, safety, and welfare of their residents and are on the front lines of this pandemic. Please remember that our first responders – police, fire, emergency medical personnel, and dispatchers – are the first line of response to citizens in need.

As you know, the generous outpouring of aid coming out of the multiple phases of the CARES Act has done much to assist medical providers, small businesses, and the unemployed. Although Central Ohio local governments are pleased with the CARES act and the recently passed phase 3.5 relief package, neither bill solved the revenue shortfalls state and local governments face. Ohio local governments are particularly vulnerable during this volatile economy due to municipal governments’ reliance on the income tax and county governments’ reliance on the sales tax.
To that end, we implore you to act to stabilize the situation and ensure that our local governments have the basic and essential resources required to protect and serve our communities. We believe the following initiatives should become top priorities in the next phase of the CARES Act:

1. **Allow all local governments, including those with a population under 500,000, to be eligible to receive direct grants for emergency COVID-19 expenditures.** If the eligibility is lowered, but not granted to all local governments, we request that smaller local governments can jointly apply for federal relief funds. In addition, we request amending the language in the CARES Act to include COVID-19 revenue shortfalls in the calculations.

2. **Waive all federal cost shares requirements for FEMA grants.** Raising the federal cost share has been done after many major disasters, including Hurricane Sandy (2012), the flooding in Louisiana in (2016), and Hurricane Irma (2019).

3. **Make state and local governments eligible for the emergency paid leave tax credits** that were provided to the private sector in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

4. **Restore Advance Refunding of Tax-Exempt Bonds (H.R. 2772):** Restoring the ability for governments and other qualifying entities to advance refund tax-exempt municipal bonds would free up billions of dollars that governments and nonprofits could spend on other projects.

The adoption of these legislative priorities will go a long way toward assisting Central Ohio’s local governments in providing essential public services through the pandemic until full recovery of the nation’s economy. We reiterate our sincere appreciation for your steadfast service to our nation and state during these most difficult times and for all that you have done to assist our communities in responding to this crisis.

Kind regards,

David A. Collinsworth, Chair
Central Ohio Mayors & Managers Assoc.

William Murdock, Executive Director
Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission