



American Planning Association
Ohio Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

July 21, 2020

The Honorable Rob Portman
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Portman:

Thank you for co-sponsoring the bipartisan Coronavirus Relief Fund Flexibility Act (S. 3638). Your efforts to ensure that local and state governments have the funding flexibility they require to replace revenue losses triggered by the pandemic is vital to addressing the fiscal shortfall that threatens all state and local budgets. I write to you on the behalf of the American Planning Association, Ohio Chapter. APA-Ohio represents over 1,100 planners, planning officials and engaged citizens across Ohio. Our members work throughout Ohio to create thriving communities that expand opportunity for all. As the Senate prepares for its return to Washington, I urge your vocal support for both additional and flexible funding in the next wave of Coronavirus relief aid.

Planners – whether working directly for municipalities and townships or private entities – keep local government functions running. But community leaders may soon be forced to cut essential planning services, if the Senate does not act soon. We are already hearing from planning directors in both rural and urban communities across Ohio that they're considering staff cuts or ending contracts for planning services as revenues dry up and response costs continue to rise. Cutting staff means losing the experience, knowledge, and support that communities will need to rebound from this crisis. It also means further delaying the development of critical infrastructure projects - which planners play an integral role – at a time when more than 700 US cities have already elected to delay or cancel infrastructure projects due to budget concerns, according to new research from the National League of Cities. Without the necessary support for planning, a long-lasting recovery may be out of reach.

Delivering flexible, direct fiscal aid will make additional funds provided to states and localities especially effective. Population eligibility caps were limitations of the CARES Act, which prevented many communities from being able to receive direct support. Communities of all sizes should not only get direct support, but also have the agency to decide how to deploy emergency funds. Allowing lost revenue to be considered an eligible expense for rescue and relief funding is vital to addressing the fiscal shortfall that threatens all state and local budgets.

Planning is essential to recovery, but we cannot do our jobs if the jobs no longer exist. It's for these reasons that I ask you to do everything in your power to ensure that additional, flexible relief for communities and states is included in the Senate's next Coronavirus package.

Thank you for your service,

Christopher A. Anderson

Christopher A. Anderson, AICP
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