



City of Lawrence

CITY COMMISSION

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April 21, 2020

Representative Steve Watkins
1205 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6521

Re: Coronavirus Community Relief Act (H.R. 6467)

Dear Representative Watkins:

The City of Lawrence is grateful for the work you and other members of the Kansas delegation have been undertaking to support critical government services and Kansans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Without the relief measures that Congress has already adopted, our community would be challenged beyond measure to meet the on-going needs of basic services that governments must provide to our citizens. However, additional direct relief is needed by the City of Lawrence and Kansas municipalities.

The CARES Act funding only allocated aid to localities with a population over 500,000 people. Thus, no direct funding from that act will go to Douglas County or the City of Lawrence. We are requesting an amendment to any emergency stimulus aid that would provide CARES Act distribution to smaller Kansas municipalities.

Cities have already incurred unfunded federal mandates to provide our employees with eighty hours of paid leave for COVID-19 related purposes. Unlike private employers who were provided with tax credits for providing such leave, public employers must cover these costs at the expense of local budgets. Cities are at the front lines of the COVID-19 response – providing key emergency responders and essential personal to maintain core services and providing critical systems such as safe drinking water, wastewater service and solid waste removal. Personal protective gear has been acquired and medical supplies to keep our critical personnel safe in this pandemic. Lawrence is also assisting critical small business. Additional small business loan availability is crucial to our local economy.

Cities now face plummeting revenue losses from sales tax declines. Property tax payers are also challenged that are now unemployed. Douglas County now has one of the highest unemployment rates in the State of Kansas. The City of Lawrence no longer has the University of Kansas students purchasing goods or working in our community during this crisis. This is a critical time for the future of Kansas. We need your assistance and ask for your support for direct aid to Kansas municipalities that will support our revenue losses and increased expenses in our efforts to overcome COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Craig S. Owens
City Manager

c: Mayor and City Commission

