

April 17, 2020

Dear Maryland Members of Congress,

The nonprofit community sincerely appreciates how responsive the Congress, and particularly the Maryland Delegation, has been during this crisis. You have approved mechanisms to help employers preserve jobs, to assist those who nevertheless are becoming jobless, and to distribute short term cash assistance to most families. With new legislation being prepared, it's important to face problems already arising in implementing these efforts and to expand and extend many that were truly quick 'stop gaps' in nature.

COVID-19, and even our best response efforts, are dramatically highlighting and exacerbating the damage and harm of the serious racial and social inequities in our nation and in Maryland. Lack of access to regular health care has compounded the pandemic for minorities and the poor. The 'digital divide' denies the poor and many in rural areas vital information about the pandemic, access to online portals for financial assistance and unemployment filing, the ability to find resources for food or shelter, ability to find comfort in virtual worship services, and school children's access to participating in online learning.

While we fight the direct effects of COVID-19, we must recognize how the lack of diversity, equity and inclusiveness in policy-making has increased our vulnerability to the health and economic miseries of the pandemic. Without immediate attention and commitment of resources it will continue to impede our efforts to recover and move forward as a nation.

Core priorities include:

1. On the frontlines, we need to increase direct ongoing funding for these problems, and provide immediate fiscal assistance to nonprofits providing our safety net.
2. Much stronger assistance is needed for state budgets that provide both infrastructure and critical funding for this work across the country. Without significantly greater support as tax revenues evaporate, unavoidable cuts in state and local budgets will offset much of the federal relief effort for people and communities in need.
3. Infrastructure investment for internet/WiFi in rural areas is critical, as well as subsidy support for internet/WiFi for those who cannot afford it.

Other specific provisions badly needed to improve and make CARES Act 1 more effective are:

1. Expanding nonprofits’ access to credit to provide for immediate financial relief by expanding nonprofit eligibility for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) or other relief programs to larger nonprofits and by establishing a dedicated funding stream for PPP loans to nonprofit organizations.
2. Strengthening temporary above-the-line charitable deduction from the CARES Act by allowing taxpayers to use it on their 2019 taxes, significantly increasing the \$300 cap, and extending it beyond 2020.
3. Holding harmless self-insured nonprofits by providing funding to cover 100% of the costs of these organizations’ unemployment claims. Without this change, many nonprofits that provide health care, food assistance, affordable housing, childcare, and other critical services will have to end or curtail services later this year.
4. Holding harmless nonprofits that utilize the PPP and other federal relief, by not cutting existing federal grants and contract payments for costs that may be covered by COVID-19 assistance.

We the undersigned members of Maryland’s nonprofit community understand that the challenges facing our nation today are unprecedented. We are confident that by working together to support nonprofit organizations and Maryland’s communities, we will be able to minimize the suffering caused by the pandemic and related economic damages and create hope for our communities.

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