Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader McConnell,

As Congress considers further legislation addressing the COVID-19 public health crisis, we must put the public servants on the frontlines in our communities at the forefront of our response. Our firefighters, teachers, childcare providers and postal workers will be the ones leading this recovery, not their elected officials who too often treat them as an afterthought. Any relief package must begin with the $500 billion in aid to states and $375 billion to local governments provided under the HEROES Act, but the Senate’s callous complacency has exacerbated crises for those on our frontlines that we must now address as well. Because the Senate and the Trump Administration allowed this pandemic to spiral out of control, we must now include additional emergency funding through firefighter grants, public school support, postal service relief, and childcare investments.

The Trump Administration’s failure to prepare for and adequately respond to the effects of COVID-19 has led to significant interruption in cities and towns across the country. The lack of any coherent national strategy has left states fighting a nationwide battle on their own. In Massachusetts, which has been particularly hard hit, our communities reacted swiftly to try to contain the virus including by implementing mask mandates and stay at home orders. As the virus rages in other parts of the country, our Commonwealth remains at heightened risk and communities continue to suffer as a result. Now due to revenue shortfalls arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, state and local governments have been forced to cope with significantly reduced revenue and resources. Without direct assistance from the federal government, many state and local governments will be unable to cover outlays to support the heroes who help keep our communities safe. Unless Congress provides additional resources to help communities navigate this crisis, those serving on the frontlines of this crisis are in danger of losing their jobs which would cause tremendous hardship to people who are already struggling.

I am proud to have voted for H.R. 6800, the HEROES Act, which would provide $500 billion in aid to states and $375 billion to local governments, and respectfully request that any additional relief proposal preserve this support. Any further relief package must include robust additional funding for first responders, specifically $500 million to the Assistance to Firefighter Grant (AFG) program as well as $500 million in increased funding for emergency Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants to ensure fire departments receive critically needed support and resources that enable them to respond to the COVID-19 public health crisis.
health emergency. The next relief package should also include at least $1.7 million in unqualified funding per public school district to allow schools to choose the operational model that best fits their needs along with dedicated funding for teacher training on COVID-19 safety guidelines and relevant state and local guidance. The positive impact of increased funding for firefighters, teachers, and other frontline workers will be dampened if workers are forced out of the workforce by a lack of child care. For this reason the next package must establish a $50 billion Child Care Stabilization Fund, provide $7 billion in funding for Child Care Development Block Grants, and include significant funding increases for Head Start. Lastly, I urge any future relief package to include at least $25 billion in emergency financial assistance to the U.S. Postal Service, consistent with the HEROES Act, to help ensure our nation’s dedicated postal employees can continue to deliver food, prescription drugs, benefit checks, and other essential items to Americans, including vote-by-mail ballots so every American is able to exercise their right to vote. Without federal commitment to these invaluable frontline services, we leave our communities at risk for long term consequences well after the direct health threat from COVID-19 expires.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Communities of every state need federal help now more than ever.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress