

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 16th, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the U.S. House of
Representatives
The U.S. Capitol - H-232
Washington D.C., 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader of the U.S. House of
Representatives
The U.S. Capitol - H-204
Washington D.C., 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

The recent weeks have tested American families and communities, especially our emergency and public health response system. Together, we have taken difficult personal and policy steps to protect public health, support families and give small businesses greatly needed breathing room.

Throughout this crisis and every day, our nation's first responders are on the frontlines working to protect our families, communities and health. They continue working to serve and protect our communities at this time of national crisis.

However, the economic crisis caused by the COVID19 pandemic is greatly reducing the revenue of local governments, the main funders of our nation's first responders. At this critical time where lives and public health are at stake, it's necessary that Congress recognize this challenge and address it by removing certain barriers that are unnecessarily stalling access to key resources for our nation's first responders.

Specifically, the *CARES 2 Act* should waive, until at least January 1, 2021, the local matching fund requirement for COVID19 resources, response and recovery grants provided under the:

- Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance Grant Program,
- FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program,
- FEMA's Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program,
- Department of Justice's (DOJ) Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program,
- and
- DOJ's Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program.

President Trump has the authority to make this local matching fund waiver under current law, but Congress must clearly show that we stand with our nation's first responders and enshrine this waiver into law.

In addition to addressing immediate-term concerns by waiving the local matching fund requirements, we must also take action to support the long-term health, wellness and resiliency of our nation's first responders.

First responders contend with higher mental health stress than other professions and the coronavirus pandemic is only increasing those burdens. If nothing else, this crisis has shown the vital importance of first responder resilience in our communities.

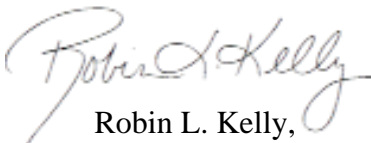
Before this crisis, our nation already had a first responder resiliency crisis. For the last five years, more police officers and firefighters have been lost to suicide than killed in the line of duty. With the tragedies unfolding in communities across the country from COVID19, we know that first response stress and mental health needs will only increase following this pandemic.

It's time for Congress to support the resiliency of our nation's first responders by permanently exempting job-related mental health grant applications from the matching fund requirements of the DOJ's COPS and FEMA's AFG programs, as proposed in my *First Responder Resiliency Act* (H.R. 6003).

This legislative proposal has already won the support of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCAA), National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers (NABLEO), National Black Police Association (NBPA), National Police Suicide Foundation, Blue H.E.L.P., Firefighters Behavior Health Alliance (FBHA), National Association of Hispanic Firefighters, the Black Fire Brigade, American Society of Suicidology and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).

Once again, let us thank you for your ongoing efforts to respond to and recover from the COVID19 pandemic while supporting our nation's brave first responders.

Sincerely,



Robin L. Kelly,
Member of Congress