



Office of the Executive

MONTGOMERY
C O U N T Y NY
Made of Something Stronger

Matthew L. Ossenfort
County Executive

September 2, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leaders McConnell and Schumer:

As you know, for months now our nation has been coping with the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis has left millions out of work and people everywhere uncertain about even the simplest tasks in their daily lives. Here in New York, this global health crisis has been felt not just by those who have experienced the loss of a loved-one or know someone who became ill, but also by all of those whose jobs and businesses have been impacted by the government-ordered shutdown.

In Montgomery County we like to say we're #StrongerTogether. Never has that spirit of connection and compassion been felt as deeply as it has been over the past six months. Our community has come together to hold numerous food drives to support those who are experiencing hunger because of the virus. We started a "Buy It In Montgomery" initiative to support our local businesses. County and local governments have even provided thousands of pieces of personal protection equipment and other materials to workers so they can continue to provide vital services.

We also launched the Covid-19 Pandemic Loan Program, which will offer Montgomery County businesses the chance to access low-interest loans to help cover up to \$10,000 in costs directly associated with the state's NY Forward reopening guidelines. Funding for the initiative will be made available through the county's Revolving Loan Fund.

Montgomery County has done all of this and more because as a government we have led during this time of crisis. Now we need leadership from the Federal government to help us come back stronger. Government leaders like myself, have been left juggling the real-time needs of our communities, while watching an 18-wheeler packed full of expenses and lost revenue barreling down on us.

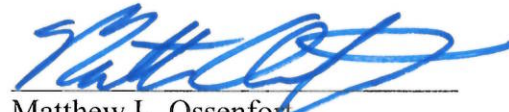
The pandemic has devastated tax revenue across the country, but especially here in the State of New York. The consequences have counties preparing for upwards of a 20 percent reduction in state reimbursements for mandated programs like early intervention services for children ages three to five, immunization services, communicable disease prevention, lead poisoning prevention and rabies services. The loss to Montgomery County's Public Health Department would be over \$1 million. Our county also has been told to prepare for state aid cuts to programming funded through the New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) and the State Office of Mental Health (OMH) that could total more than to \$357,000 – despite a mandate to continue to providing necessary services like suicide prevention and Narcan distribution. Residents cannot afford to see a dramatic reduction in these types of services as many struggle with substance abuse or have experienced job loss during the pandemic.

As members of the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives negotiate the next federal Coronavirus relief package, I encourage you to include aid for local county governments and municipalities that is paid directly to those governments – regardless of their size. Aid flowing through the states for smaller municipalities risks that funding becoming a political football, especially here in New York where state officials too often place a premium on the needs of larger, downstate communities, often at the expense of our area.

Montgomery County has time and again proven its willingness to sacrifice for the good of those around us. But we can only cut so much. On behalf of the more than 49,000 residents of Montgomery County, New York, I urge you to ensure our local governments receive support directly when the next relief package is passed. We are counting on you.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office directly if you wish to better understand the real-world consequences of throwing up political and bureaucratic barriers to federal funding for counties like mine. Montgomery County might be just one county, but thousands of others could be disenfranchised if Congress doesn't get this right.

Sincerely,



Matthew L. Ossenfort
County Executive
Montgomery County, New York

cc:

U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Representative Paul Tonko (NY- 20)
Representative Antonio Delgado (NY -19)