



May 14, 2020

All cities, towns and villages are essential to Vermont's re-opening and recovery post COVID-19. That is why the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) has joined the National League of Cities (NLC) "Cities Are Essential" campaign, aimed at getting direct financial assistance to cities, towns and villages through the Phase 4 COVID-19 Stimulus Package. If attached strings are limited, this package could assist municipalities with lost revenue, ease the concerns of residents about tax hikes or significant budget cuts and promote the revitalization of businesses and downtowns. Comments made at the national level about it being a better option for states and municipalities to declare bankruptcy than to receive aid from the federal government are reckless and uninformed. First, municipalities cannot declare bankruptcy in Vermont and second, local officials would not want to do so even if that option were available. Local officials care about their communities and want to be in a position to help the recovery, not exacerbate the negative effects of the pandemic. The Phase 4 COVID-19 Stimulus Package could offer that opportunity for positive front-line assistance.

We need your help with this national campaign.

Recognizing that all organizations are working on legislative activities and other preparations for re-opening, VLCT is asking the business community to work with us to explain the effect the pandemic has had on your business specifically or on businesses in your community or region. That will assist us in reinforcing the need for funds to stimulate the economy, as well as the particular needs of business as it relates to communities. It would also be helpful to hear about the ways that you are hoping local governments can help you through the recovery.

Tell us your story. Please share details about how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting your business – and how you expect it will be further affected if cities and towns continue to be financially strapped. This information will reinforce the national campaign for funding assistance to municipalities in order to assist in the recovery effort.

If you are inclined to send a letter or message to members of the Congressional delegation, we would appreciate that, but would be most grateful for data about the experience of downtown businesses and other businesses, stories about your circumstances, and stories about your concerns if municipalities are unable to remain fiscally stable, so we can share them with the delegation and with NLC.

If you share your stories and concerns with the delegation directly, please copy VLCT on any communication so that we can be as effective as possible in our efforts to assist our members and all of you in getting those critical funds.

For more information about NLC's campaign, visit <https://covid19.nlc.org/cities-are-essential>. If you would like to provide some information or have questions, you may contact me directly at mcarroll@vlct.org.