United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
U.S. Capitol, S-230
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
U.S. Capitol, S-221
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

Following up on the State, County and Locality Stabilization Fund passed as part of the CARES Act in late March 2020, we believe there is an opportunity to further stabilize local government funding in rural counties throughout America. We respectfully request a long-term solution for the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS) and Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) programs at the next possible opportunity.

The stop and start authorizations and payments under SRS and PILT have wreaked havoc on rural America for decades, and now, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the budgets of these rural counties are decimated. These two programs fund roads, schools, law enforcement, and essential county services, such as public health programs. With inadequate funding and now additional demands on their resources, rural communities and counties are at the breaking point.

Despite being small, rural, and generally relatively remote, county governments that rely on SRS and PILT are responding to the same national health crisis facing larger cities and urban areas. Extending these two programs has wide, bipartisan support, which was on display as recently as 2019, when the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a legislative hearing on PILT and SRS, and received testimony on legislation that would permanently extend SRS and build on the historic link between timber receipts and county payments.

In order to assist these rural counties' response to the current public health crisis, as well as to invest in infrastructure, schools, and law enforcement, Congress must consider long-term solutions for PILT and SRS as soon as possible to ensure viability for these programs for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Mike Crapo
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

James E. Risch
United States Senator

/S/ Michael F. Bennet

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Steve Daines
United States Senator

/S/ Tom Udall

Tom Udall
United States Senator

/S/ Martha McSally

Martha McSally
United States Senator

/S/ Kyrsten Sinema

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator

Cory Gardner
United States Senator

/S/ Joe Manchin III

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

Josh Hawley
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

/S/ John Boozman

John Boozman
United States Senator

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

/S/ Kamala D. Harris

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

Tim Scott
United States Senator

/S/ Dan Sullivan

Dan Sullivan
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/S/ Amy Klobuchar

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Mitt Romney
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

/S/ Martin Heinrich

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator