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May 7, 2020

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

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

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

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

Over the past few months, across the ideological spectrum, Members of Congress have put partisanship aside to provide the authority and funding this Administration deemed essential to the COVID-19 relief and recovery effort. This has resulted in over \$2 trillion in new direct spending and unprecedented authority for the U.S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury), the Small Business Administration (SBA), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and numerous other federal agencies and entities engaged in the response to this pandemic. Unfortunately, while there have been some success stories, I continue to hear from West Virginia families, small business owners, nonprofits, rural healthcare providers, Veterans, and front line workers who are not getting the help they desperately need now. As we look toward the future and the next COVID-19 aid package, I urge you to focus on the commonsense, bipartisan fixes we all know we need to make these programs work for Main Street, not Wall Street.

Make no mistake, the SBA Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) has succeeded in getting money out the door to businesses quickly. In the program's first 13 days of operation, it distributed \$349 billion to 1.6 million businesses. As of May 1<sup>st</sup>, one week after receiving another \$321 billion from Congress, it had distributed nearly half of that (\$175.7 billion) to over 2.2 million businesses. Unfortunately, despite the small lender set asides, the small mom and pop shops that are the lifeblood of our economy are still largely unable to access the PPP funding they need to stay afloat. The funding that does trickle down to those lucky business that were able to receive it doesn't actually help because of all the red tape and unknowns that comes along with it. There's no reason we can't find a better way to get help into the hands of struggling small businesses by establishing a true small business set aside and removing the financial incentives for banks to issue larger loans. There's no reason we can't reduce the bureaucratic barriers by extending the eligible expense reimbursement window from 8 to 16 weeks and providing more flexibility for

the loan forgiveness criteria. There's no reason we can't make these kinds of commonsense, bipartisan fixes in the next bill.

While I am proud of the bipartisan support we have in Congress for dedicated funding to assist our rural healthcare providers, it is clear that this Administration will not do what needs to be done on their own. Out of the \$175 billion that has been dedicated to the Provider Relief Fund, our rural healthcare providers have had only \$10 billion dedicated to them. Fortunately, we have simple, bipartisan solutions to this problem too. We can amend the formula to prioritize vulnerable populations – like West Virginia with our high elderly population – and communities with a high number of Medicaid recipients and set-aside 20% of these funds specifically for our rural providers. Our hospitals and healthcare providers have invested heavily to prepare for the pandemic, having cancelled tens-of-thousands of elective surgeries and non-emergency patient tests at the government's request. This major shift has put our front line healthcare providers on the brink of financial disaster. That's why we also need to forgive the Medicare accelerated payments' interest rates and pursue full loan forgiveness. Forgiveness would be for healthcare related expenses or lost revenues that are directly attributable to coronavirus. We can improve these programs before investing additional taxpayer dollars in them, and we must.

We must also take careful inventory of the funding that's already been approved by Congress, but remains unspent or unavailable to the people on the ground. In my home state of West Virginia, for example, the Governor received \$1.25 billion through the Coronavirus Relief Fund to aid state and local government response efforts, almost none of which has reached our cities and counties. While I remain disappointed and frustrated by Treasury's refusal to amend the arbitrary restrictions they placed on this funding – which they could do tomorrow – I am encouraged by the broad, bipartisan, bicameral support that exists for including these commonsense reforms in the next aid package, and I am proud to help lead the effort. Not only are our state and local partners on the front line of the immediate response effort, they are also major employers navigating unprecedented declines in revenue just as the need for their services hits an all-time high. They need our help now.

Now don't get me wrong – I do believe that we can fix the fundamental problems with the current programs and invest in strategic national priorities that will lay the foundation for strong, sustainable economic growth for years to come. We can close the digital divide by investing in more mobile hotspots today and improving our maps so that we're investing in the places that need it the most tomorrow. We can bring healthy, nutritious meals to more seniors in need by recapitalizing our home-based delivery fleet. We can invest in the programs that provide critical services to children and youth experiencing homelessness. We can address long-standing pay disparities among our first responders. We can emerge from this pandemic better and stronger than ever, but it will take all of us working together.

As our country looks to reopen, we must ensure that public health experts, government officials, and business leaders have the information and resources they need to make informed decisions. We must ensure that all exposed workers, from dentists to barbers and everyone in between, need face coverings and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to prevent infection. We should leverage the expertise of our national labs, like the National Energy Technology Lab in Morgantown, West Virginia, to find innovative solutions such as PPE decontamination. We also need widespread, fast, and free testing nationwide. Every state and every community – including those that often struggle to access healthcare, such as rural communities with health professional shortages and medically underserved populations – needs testing kits, supplies, equipment and the necessary public health personnel to conduct these tests. We cannot restore consumer

confidence in the economy until we restore our constituents' confidence in the health and safety of the communities in which they live.

In his first inaugural address, with the nation on the verge of a civil war, President Lincoln ended on a hopeful note, expressing his faith in "the better angels of our nature." I have embraced his example during these difficult times and implored my fellow West Virginians and my fellow Americans to let their better angel fly. Today, I urge you to do the same, and I stand ready and willing to work with you to make these programs and this recovery work for the people we have the honor to represent.

With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Manchin III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator