January 29, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader, United States Senate  
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-224  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader, United States Senate  
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-230  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker, United States House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader, United States House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

On behalf of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP), we write to thank you for your continuing support for economic development and infrastructure investment in rural communities and urge you to prioritize support for underserved communities in all future Covid response and recovery packages. As a nonprofit network reaching rural and small communities in all 50 states, we know all too well that the economic crisis presented by COVID-19 has only served to exacerbate the challenges rural and underinvested communities face.

Specifically, we urge you to consider increasing funding for the following programs, all of which serve as crucially important support for rural communities:

- **Invest in Rural Water and Waste Disposal Infrastructure**: Enact an infrastructure package similar to the Moving Forward Act, which included $100 billion for water systems over 5 years. Additionally, provide at least $2 billion in loans and $2 billion in grants to USDA’s Water Environment Program per year.

- **Support Existing Systems in Financial Difficulty to Due COVID-19**: Provide grant assistance, debt forgiveness, and loan restructuring included in the bipartisan Emergency Assistance for Rural Water Systems Act (S. 4633) and (H.R. 7895).

- **Support Technical Assistance**: Increase funding for Rural Water Technical Assistance Resources available to RCAP and other organizations at USDA, EPA, and HHS, specifically:
  - EPA Technical Assistance and Training: $35 million
  - EPA Publicly Owned Treatment Works Technical Assistance: $18 million
  - HHS Rural Community Facilities Technical Assistance: $10 million
  - USDA: $50 million for the overall Rural Utility Service Technical Assistance and Training Grant account, and specifically $30 million for the set aside within this account reserved for multi-state regional technical assistance serving populations of 3300 or below.

- **Water Regionalization**: Establish the Water and Wastewater Regionalization Technical Assistance program funded at $50 million/year for qualified rural nonprofit, multi-regional, and national organizations to facilitate regionalization projects.

- **Address PFAS**: Create a $20 million technical assistance program for qualified rural nonprofit, multi-regional, and national organizations to support efforts to combat PFAS contamination.

- **Support low-income households**: In late December 2020, for the first time ever, Congress appropriated $638 million in assistance for low-income water and wastewater customers. While we applaud Congress
for this historic action, we urge you to increase the funding for this program to $8 billion, to be in line with the true need in our communities.

- **Invest in Rural Community Development**: Increase funding for Rural Community Development Initiative grants to $25 million to help rural communities build their capacity to improve housing, community facilities, and economic development.

- **Increase funding for the Economic Development Administration’s Technical Assistance Program**: In FY21 Appropriations, Congress funded a technical assistance program to allow qualified nonprofits to assist economically distressed small, rural and underserved communities with pre-development activities associated with accessing EDA programs and services. While we applaud you for supporting this crucial program, we urge you to increase the funding for this program to $20 million and increase overall funding for EDA to $3 billion.

RCAP works with communities and partners across the country to advocate for and generate economic opportunities and infrastructure investment for rural areas and to ensure that every community has the resources needed to thrive. The services provided through these programs will deliver critical assistance in the small and disadvantaged communities where it is most needed, especially as our country continues to respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure this important funding is included in any and all Covid response packages.

Thank you,

Nathan Ohle, Chief Executive Officer
Rural Community Assistance Partnership

Cc: Chairman Sanders, Ranking Member Graham, Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, Chairman Yarmuth, Ranking Member Smith, Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers, Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Chairman Scott, and Ranking Member Thompson