

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

April 23, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

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

We urge you to include in any future legislation provisions to modify the requirement for states to provide a 20 percent match for the \$400 million in election assistance grants included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Specifically, we should empower the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), which administers the grants, to waive this requirement in cases where exigent circumstances related to the pandemic may prevent states from making use of available funding.

State and local election officials nationwide are working heroically to prepare for the 2020 elections amidst an unprecedented public health crisis. The \$400 million in new election funding reflects the clear intent of Congress to support their work to ensure the safety and participation of voters across the country.

Although the CARES Act did not specify a 20 percent requirement, the EAC has made it clear that it can only award funding to states that provide a 20 percent match, consistent with restrictions in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020. Given the unprecedented strain the COVID-19 pandemic has placed on state budgets, the match requirement could mean that several states are unable to take advantage of new election funding at the very moment it is most needed.

In this national crisis, we should not ask states to choose between providing critical services and safeguarding our democracy. Moreover, in some cases securing matching funds will require approval by the state legislature, yet many state legislatures have since adjourned and have no plans to return until after the November elections.

For all of these reasons, state and local election from both political parties have called on Congress to revisit the 20 percent match requirement.

As Congress considers additional legislation to address the ongoing pandemic, we respectfully urge you to give EAC the flexibility to waive this requirement in cases where exigent circumstances related to the pandemic risk impeding a state's ability to make use of new election security funding.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters. We stand ready to partner with you to support our state and local election officials as they work to ensure the safety and participation of voters in the 2020 elections.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Michael F. Bennet in blue ink.

Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Susan M. Collins in blue ink.

Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator