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SENATE COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

May 08, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor, State of Texas
State Capitol, 2S.1
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Governor Abbott:

I write to you as a follow-up to a correspondence I sent you two months ago, on March 19, 2020, in which I requested greater resources, extending drive-thru testing, and increasing the availability of tests in Lower Rio Grande Valley. In the same letter, I also argued the need for increased resources to the Valley is even more acute because the Valley has the most vulnerable and uninsured populations in Texas and because it neighbors Mexico. I thank you and our state agencies -- especially the Texas Department of State Health Services, the Texas Division of Emergency Management, and our Texas Guard -- for making increased testing and personal protection equipment available in our region.

With a sense of urgency, I write to you today to restate the need for increased resources for our border communities, especially those along the border region because as you aptly stated in March, this invisible disease "knows no geographic and no jurisdictional boundaries and threatens the lives of our fellow Americans across this entire country." I am also very thankful that on April 23rd, you announced that Texas A&M System Chancellor John Sharp, and Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) Chief Nim Kidd were working together to have the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provide local jurisdictions training regarding the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. In fact, I helped inform the local mayors of Cameron County of this critical training in a conference call I hosted with them on April 30. I urged my mayors to sign up for the training since it would greatly assist them understand, acquire, and administer these federal disaster relief funds.

Many of the smaller communities that I represent, those with less than 500,000 in population, continue to ask for greater guidance on the specific mechanism that our state has developed for them to receive critical assistance. These small community officials have shared with me how their tax base has been eroded due to the mandatory "stay-at-home" orders, which you allowed to expire on April 30. As the criteria and distribution of the state's share of the \$11.2 billion continue to be refined, I respectfully implore you to consider investing an allocation on smaller cities and communities that are within the counties that are on the immediate border with Mexico. Again, as you aptly argued in March, this invisible disease "knows no geographic and no jurisdictional boundaries," and as such, this highly communicable disease puts a greater strain and poses a



bigger threat to our smaller cities in Texas who face daily international commute from Mexico. Since these communities have lower per capita income and tax bases than any other similarly populated areas in Texas, as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, I respectfully ask you to consider having a targeted allocation for these communities since they are so vital to the state's international commerce and trade interests with Texas' number one trade partner.

I thank you once again for directing Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to be providing training to our local officials and I respectfully ask you to consider strengthening the accessibility of these funds to our smaller communities in need by affording them the greatest amount of flexibility possible so along as TDEM's high standards of accountability can be met. I trust that everyone agrees that TDEM's record of accomplishment in helping our communities after a disaster through their accounting and record keeping standards has yielded the highest reimbursement amounts in the nation.

As IGR Chair, I stand ready to assist you in everything that you may need to continue to inform our smaller communities in Texas how they can acquire and receive their portion of critical CARES Act funding. I thank you in advance for continuing to safeguard our border communities which are critical to our state economy through their unique international commerce and trade nature, and for considering to provide a funding allocation to smaller communities within counties that immediately border Mexico.

Sincerely,



Eddie Lucio, Jr.
Texas Senator, District 27
Chairman, Texas Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Relations

