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SENATOR
EDDIE LUCIO, JR.

July 2, 2020

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

Dear Governor Abbott:

It is with a great sense of urgency that I write to you on behalf of the Rio Grande Valley constituents that you and I represent and respectfully ask for your help in providing much needed relief to vulnerable families in the Rio Grande Valley. Our constituents are hurting, living with food insecurity to a degree not experienced anywhere else in the state, and are in dire need of your assistance. As the devastating coronavirus outbreak expands at alarming levels throughout our Valley communities and creates insurmountable obstacles in the ability of our constituents to find the means to provide food for their families, I respectfully seek your leadership in ensuring our state does not allow these vulnerable Texans to fall through the cracks.

As you are aware, the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on our border economy that is greatly dependent on international trade and commerce. Regrettably, the debilitating public health crisis disproportionately affected and displaced our Valley constituents. Local and state media confirmed last week "Texans struggle to find work in the Rio Grande Valley, where unemployment has nearly tripled." As I shared with you in my June 25 correspondence, the *Texas Tribune* reported last month "in the Rio Grande Valley, the lack of jobs is even more pronounced. The region's unemployment rate in May was 17.1%, well above the statewide rate of 13%." As I stressed in June, reputable news outlets reported, "in February, before the pandemic gripped Texas, the Rio Grande Valley's unemployment rate was 6.5%. The increase since shows how hard the Valley has been hit by the economic collapse caused by the coronavirus pandemic and limits on the U.S.-Mexico border crossings that fuel its retail industry. Even the slowdown in the oil and gas sector has affected employees who live in the Valley and work in that industry."

Understanding that before the COVID-19 outbreak, the Rio Grande Valley was among the most economically challenged regions in our state, the destructive pandemic has taken a toll on our economy and has worsened our economic outlook by creating insurmountable challenges for unemployed Texans in the Valley to find the means to provide food for their vulnerable families. Regrettably, the alarming rise in COVID-19 cases has created daunting obstacles for our constituents to be able to feed their loved ones. As great as our state is, for no fault of their own, these noteworthy Texans find themselves having to rely on our Food Banks to be able to provide



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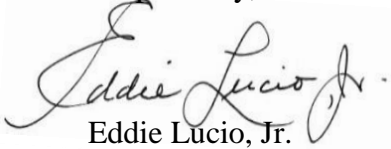
COMMITTEES: CHAIR, INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS ★ VICE-CHAIR, EDUCATION ★ NATURAL RESOURCES & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ★
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nourishing meals for their families. That is why I was shocked when Hidalgo County Judge Richard Cortez informed me that, unfortunately, Texas decided to end the deployment of Texas National Guard units, which have been helping with food distribution in our region. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold at alarming rates and Texans continue to lose their jobs at unprecedented levels, I implore you to intervene in this most perilous situation and help our Texas families in need before the deployment of this much needed resource ends on Wednesday, July 8.

With the welfare of the families that you and I represent in the Rio Grande Valley, I respectfully implore you to reconsider the state's decision to end the deployment of the Texas National Guard, which has been the safety net for thousands of unemployed Texans and their families in the Rio Grande Valley. As the public health crisis worsens each day, now -- more than ever -- vulnerable Texans are in need of leadership to reassure them that their state will not turn its back on them during the most challenging of times in modern history.

As a fellow Christian guided by the best interest of our most vulnerable constituents, displaced Texans and their families, I thank you in advance for your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you to continue address the needs of our Rio Grande Valley.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eddie Lucio, Jr." with a small flourish at the end.

Eddie Lucio, Jr.
State Senator, District 27

Cc: The Honorable Richard Cortez, Hidalgo County Judge

