March 28, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Through: MaryAnn Tierney  
Regional Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency – Region III  
One Independence Mall  
615 Chestnut Street, Sixth Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Dear President Trump:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C §§ 5121-5207 ("Stafford Act"), as implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36, I request that you declare a Major Disaster for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania ("Commonwealth") because of the novel coronavirus ("COVID-19"). Specifically, the Commonwealth requests the following eligible Individual Assistance programs: Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Crisis Counseling, Community Disaster Loans and the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Program to support the COVID-19 response. Further, I request authorization for Public Assistance Category A, Debris Removal, Category B, Emergency Protective Measures, and Hazard Mitigation statewide to allow the Commonwealth to continue its response to the immediate threat to lives, public health, safety and the environment, from COVID-19. The incident period for this request begins January 20, 2020, and continuing, to apply to all sixty-seven (67) counties of the Commonwealth. This request is timely under 44 CFR § 206.36(a). FEMA Form 010-0-13 is included with this request.


On February 1, 2020, I directed my Secretary of Health to activate the Commonwealth’s Department of Health ("DOH") Operations Center at the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency’s ("PEMA") headquarters to conduct public health and medical coordination for COVID-19 throughout the Commonwealth. On March 4, 2020, I directed the PEMA Director to activate the Commonwealth Response Coordination Center in full support of DOH’s response to COVID-19. Further, on March 6, 2020, I issued a Proclamation of Disaster Emergency declaring that the entirety of the Commonwealth was in a state of disaster emergency, and to ensure that all Commonwealth agencies involved in the COVID-19 response have the expedited resources needed to respond to the virus.
As COVID-19 rapidly spread throughout the Commonwealth via person-to-person contact, the Secretary of Health and I issued Business Closure Orders on March 19, 2020. The Business Closure Orders prohibit the operation of non-life sustaining businesses until further notice, as those businesses in infected communities present the opportunity for unnecessary gatherings, personal contact, and interactions that will transmit COVID-19. As of March 27, 2020, all counties or major cities in the Commonwealth have issued emergency declarations and activated their Emergency Operations Centers.

Based on current conditions, I request Public Assistance Category A, Debris Removal, Category B, Emergency Protective Measures, and Hazard Mitigation statewide. In addition, I request authorization for the following Individual Assistance Programs: Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Crisis Counseling, Community Disaster Loans, and the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Program. Support for my request follows.

Pursuant to 44 CFR § 206.48(b), the Stafford Act factors FEMA considers when evaluating the need for supplemental federal assistance include the following:

1. State Fiscal Capacity and Resources Availability;
2. Uninsured Home and Personal Property Losses;
3. Disaster Impacted Population Profile;
4. Impact to Community Infrastructure;
5. Casualties; and
6. Disaster-Related Unemployment.

Given the nature of this event and constantly changing information, the Commonwealth offers the following data to support its request in contemplation of the above factors.

1. **State Fiscal Capacity and Resources Availability**

   The Commonwealth has currently allocated all available resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, while adjusting to its own significant economic impact related to COVID-19. As of March 27, 2020, current projected Commonwealth coordination and response actions total more than $19 million in services, materials and supplies since January 20, 2020. This figure does not include the direct expenses of local political subdivisions and supporting private entities. Those local governments and supporting entities are also significantly strained, as financial resources that were reasonably expected to be at their disposal to respond to COVID-19 have been severely affected. Business revenues and tax receipts are suffering and without supplemental federal assistance, the Commonwealth’s ability to sufficiently respond to and recover from this event will be severely impacted.

   To address these crippling financial shortfalls, the Commonwealth has allocated $60,000,000 to the COVID-19 Working Capital Access (“CWCA”) Program. The CWCA Program, administered by the Department of Community and Economic Development’s (“DCED”) Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority, will provide critical working capital financing to Commonwealth small businesses adversely impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak.
Further, on March 18, 2020, I requested a Small Business Administration (“SBA”) disaster declaration authorizing the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program to provide low-interest federal disaster loans for Commonwealth businesses negatively impacted by COVID-19. The SBA request was granted on March 19, 2020. Pursuant to the Business Closure Orders, over 21,000 non-life sustaining businesses were required to close to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as of March 27, 2020. While these non-life sustaining businesses have already reported negative impacts, the full economic impact of these closures will not be fully realized for years. Thousands of small businesses remain closed and are experiencing severe reductions in sales and income. While some businesses have fortunately been able to maintain payroll during this outbreak, many businesses have had to lay off employees, causing tens of thousands of unemployment claims in the Commonwealth (see 6. Disaster-Related Unemployment, below). This wave of unemployment due to COVID-19 will inevitably strain and potentially exceed the Commonwealth’s ability to meet the needs of unemployed Pennsylvanians.

On March 20, 2020, the Commonwealth began a local government assessment survey of the eligible Public Assistance applicants known to be incurring costs directly associated with eligible emergency protective measures focused on combating COVID-19. As of March 27, 2020, over 1,700 eligible state, county and local government applicants have reported incurred costs at approximately $142 million since January 20, 2020. Further, survey applicants have reported that projected costs could exceed $1.2 billion.

Compounding the matter, the Commonwealth is still recovering from multiple previous disasters, including 2016 Severe Storms and Flooding (FEMA–4292-DR) and 2018 Severe Storms and Flooding (FEMA–4408-DR). This does not include numerous localized impacts from severe storms over the past few years, and where the SBA declared emergencies, many still active: June 2019 flash flooding in Berks County; July 2019 flash flooding in Allegheny, Berks and Clarion counties; and October/November 2019 severe storms and high winds in Erie County.

2. Uninsured Home and Personal Property Losses

The Commonwealth is not requesting the activation of the Individuals and Households Program; therefore, the requested Home and Personal Property Loss data is not applicable.

3. Disaster Impacted Population Profile

According to the Pennsylvania State Data Center, the Commonwealth’s official source of population and economic statistics:

- Pennsylvania ranks fifth among all states in population of citizens aged 65 and over (2.2 million, or 18.5% of total Pennsylvania population); that rate grows 20 times faster than Pennsylvania’s overall population growth rate.
- Pennsylvania’s poverty rate is 12.1% of the population.
- Pennsylvania’s small businesses employed 2.5 million people, or 46.7% of the private workforce, in 2015. (Source: Statistics of U.S. Businesses).
- In 2018, 5.5% of Pennsylvania’s population did not have health insurance. The portion of Pennsylvania’s population with the highest percentage of uninsured are those aged 10-64 years.
- With the sharp increase in layoffs due to COVID-19, the number of uninsured Pennsylvanians will increase.
This event will have wide-reaching negative impacts on the Commonwealth’s healthcare infrastructure (see 4. Impact to Community Infrastructure, below). As noted above, the Commonwealth ranks fifth among all states in population aged 65 and over and this figure grows at a rate twenty times faster than Pennsylvania’s overall population. Taken in conjunction with reports on COVID-19’s disproportionate impact on older demographics, COVID-19 could affect a staggering number of older Pennsylvanians, those shown to be most susceptible to the virus. Further straining the Commonwealth’s healthcare system, an estimated 5.5% of Pennsylvania’s population do not have health insurance. With the increasing number of unemployed (see 6. Disaster-Related Unemployment, below), the number of uninsured Pennsylvanians is also expected to increase.

4. Impact to Community Infrastructure

COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, a drastic effect on community infrastructure. Hospitals, medical facilities, and first responders are facing challenges rarely experienced before. The process of triaging and isolating potentially affected individuals is significantly disrupting lifesaving and life-sustaining services. Currently, resources and capacities of medical facilities are rapidly depleting. The limited number of qualified medical personnel is decreasing while COVID-19 continues to spread.

All 500 Commonwealth school districts have been, and remain, closed since March 16, 2020. Pennsylvania’s private, parochial and charter schools, as well as the 29 Commonwealth Intermediate Units remain closed. Social service programs have been compromised and are being handled remotely or through electronic means. Most childcare facilities have either closed or been severely disrupted due to the Business Closure Orders that were imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

5. Casualties

As of March 28, 2020, the Pennsylvania Department of Health reports 2,751 individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 and 34 fatalities as a direct result of COVID-19. While the Commonwealth is doing everything in its power to prevent further life impact, more casualties are expected.

6. Disaster-Related Unemployment

On March 13, 2020, the Commonwealth initiated a survey of all businesses in Pennsylvania to determine economic impact because of the Business Closure Orders that have been imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The survey indicated that a majority of Commonwealth businesses are experiencing greater than a seventy percent (70%) loss of revenue because of the COVID-19 emergency. The Commonwealth is still assessing the number of unemployed citizens laid off due to business closures affected by COVID-19. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (“L&I”), 746,666 unemployment compensation requests have been filed since March 1, 2020. The February 2020 unemployment rate in Pennsylvania was 4.7%, but with almost 750,000 new unemployment claims this month, the March 2020 unemployment figure will increase dramatically. The official March 2020 figure will be available on April 17, 2020.

During this unprecedented time, the Commonwealth is receiving a staggering number of calls, both in the process of applications for the CWCA Program through DCED, and continued unemployment compensation filings through L&I. Further, DCED has processed over 21,000 requests from businesses seeking an exemption from the Business Closure Orders. This number is likely to grow as the Business Closure Orders remain in effect.
Please consider the information above, along with the data provided in FEMA Form 010-0-13 (enclosed) in your assessment of the Commonwealth’s requests for Public Assistance: Category A, Debris Removal, Category B, Emergency Protective Measures, Hazard Mitigation statewide; and Individual Assistance: Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Crisis Counseling, Community Disaster Loans, and the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Program. For administrative processing purposes, all information that would be included in required Enclosure A (Individual Assistance) has been incorporated into this letter. I do not anticipate requesting the Individuals and Households Program at this time; however, the Commonwealth reserves the right to request further programs should conditions warrant.

Finally, in addition to Public Assistance and Individual Assistance, the Commonwealth requests the following:

- Extension of application deadlines for an additional 90 days, reserving the right to request additional time, to periods of performance and other deadlines pursuant to all active agreements for the Homeland Security Grant Program, Non-Profit Security Grant Program, and the Emergency Management Grant Program.

- Extension of appeal deadlines for an additional 90 days, reserving the right to request additional time, for the FEMA Public Assistance Program. This includes the suspension of appeal decisions concerning timeliness of appeals for both Recipients and Subrecipients.

- Extension of deadlines for an additional 90 days, reserving the right to request additional time, for all pending and current Requests for Information (“RFI”) for the FEMA Public Assistance Program.

- Extension of an additional 90 days, reserving the right to request additional time, for new FEMA Public Assistance Program determination memos for failure to respond to RFIs, or failure to submit any other documentation as requested. This request also includes an extension for determination memos finding costs or Applicants ineligible for FEMA Public Assistance funding.

- Extension of an additional 90 days, reserving the right to request additional time, to periods of performance, to include time extensions, for the completion of all projects under the FEMA Public Assistance Program.

- Extension of an additional 90 days, reserving the right to request additional time, to periods of performance and other deadlines for all active FEMA Cooperative Technical Partner agreements in the Commonwealth.

- Extension of an additional 90 days, reserving the right to request additional time, to periods of performance and other deadlines for all active FEMA High Hazard Dam agreements in the Commonwealth.

- Extension of an additional 90 days, reserving the right to request additional time, to periods of performance and other deadlines for all active FEMA Community Assistance Program – State Support Services Element Program agreements in the Commonwealth.
• Extension of an additional 90 days, reserving the right to request additional time, for Commonwealth communities that have received Letters of Final Map Determination, to implement required floodplain management ordinances, as the result of a modified Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map, so that these communities remain in good standing with the National Flood Insurance Program.

The extensions enumerated above will allow for Commonwealth, county and local government resources currently dedicated to responding to COVID-19 to remain engaged in their mission without negatively impacting their ability to respond and act timely where appropriate.

I have designated Jeffrey A. Thomas, PEMA Executive Deputy Director, as the State Coordinating Officer for this emergency. Deputy Director Thomas is authorized to provide further information, assurances, requests, or justification on my behalf.

Your consideration of this request to assist the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the response to COVID-19 is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

TOM WOLF
Governor

Enclosures

FEMA Form 010-0-13
A: Individual Assistance (NOT APPLICABLE)
B: Public Assistance
C: Requirements for Other Federal Agency Programs (NOT APPLICABLE)