VICENTE GONZALEZ
15TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTOR PROTECTION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CAPITAL MARKETS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND INSURANCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE, CIVILIAN SECURITY, AND TRADE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, EURASIA, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–4315

WASHINGTON OFFICE
113 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225–2531

MCALLEN OFFICE
1305 W. HACKBERRY AVENUE
MCALLEN, TX 78501
(956) 682–5545

gonzalez.house.gov

March 19, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
The United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
The United States Senate
Washington D.C. 20510

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

As we work to mitigate the myriad of challenges associated with the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, I write to request that your administration take all necessary and appropriate administrative actions and back legislation to support our students, small businesses, seniors, state and local governments, the uninsured, and ensure an accurate decennial Census. We are confronting unprecedented challenges and we need to adapt, and quickly.

Internet Connectivity

As K-12, college and university instruction and coursework move online, we must ensure students and teachers have the tools and resources they need to continue learning and teaching. The Federal Communications Commission, in conjunction with the Department of Education and telecommunications companies, should work to improve access for students that may have difficulties accessing the internet, particularly in areas that already experience limited access, such as rural America. Any disruptions in internet service could have lasting impacts on academic performance and development.

Healthcare

We must focus on testing, prevention, and treatment for all COVID-19 patients regardless of their economic circumstance. Even seemingly small co-pays are an unacceptable barrier to care. Our communities need free drive-thru testing in every county in every State across the United States as soon as possible in order to make testing more efficient and reduce exposure for health care professionals. I also recommend establishing electronic delivery of test results and guaranteeing free treatment for all COVID-19 patients and any conditions that have worsened due to the virus.

Census

The administration needs to ensure the 2020 Census can be accurately recorded while following guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). I believe an extension to the enumeration

period should be implemented to maintain the quality of the count this year and allow people time to participate. The 15th District of Texas, and many others across the country, have hard-to-count populations living in rural areas that must be considered. Absent contingency planning, these groups are at a greater risk of being left out.

Small Business

We must make more funds, in the form of grants, loans, and capital, available for small business owners and in turn ensure that the Small Business Administration (SBA), Department of the Treasury, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System release these funds in a timely manner to both small business owners and regional and community banks. I ask that the aforementioned agencies expedite the review of such requests, provide technical assistance to applicants, and implement any other measures to expedite the distribution of aid once approved, particularly to areas heavily dependent on international trade and adversely impacted by supply chain disruptions.

Rental Assistance, Foreclosures, and Evictions

Housing is a basic necessity that must be given the utmost attention when delivering resources to those in need. We must ensure that we provide additional support and personnel to assist with the housing of our most vulnerable populations, including children and seniors. It is imperative that during this crisis we do not create homelessness, and that is why I am calling for a moratorium on evictions or foreclosures for the duration of this situation. These property owners, however cannot be thrust into bearing this burden, so it is critical that rental assistance be provided through the federal government, so that our nation's affordable housing supply is not further shrunk.

Consumer Credit, Debt Collection

Consumer credit should not be impaired by virtue of income interruption caused by this crisis and debt collection must not continue in the face of these conditions. Having said this, it is important that we do not choke the businesses that we depend on for employment, goods, and services in this time of crisis. It is therefore important that we consider the suspension of collections related activities for commercial enterprises at this critical time.

Student Loan Suspension

Our nation has faced an impending student loan crisis for years, and COVID-19 will not absolve us of our inattention to this looming threat. Suspending collection activities for student loan debt is the barest of relief that we can provide, and I urge you to consider a reprieve from these loans. At minimum, a moratorium on interest accrued could be beneficial to those currently in school.

Taking immediate action to implement these measures now will make all the difference as we continue responding to this pandemic. I urge you and your administration to act accordingly.

Sincerely,

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress