

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Steven Bellone
SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE

April 20, 2020

Hon. Steven Mnuchin, Secretary
Department of the Treasury
Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Re: COVID 19 Pandemic Relief – Municipal Liquidity Facility

Dear Secretary Mnuchin,

As the Chief Executive of the most populous county in New York State outside of New York City, I write now with a sense of urgency to request your assistance in enabling our government to access the Municipal Liquidity Facility to help jumpstart our economy and protect our local taxpayers. Having this access will help us to continue our ongoing COVID 19 response operations and to meet Suffolk County's obligations under State law to protect the fiscal stability of its 10 townships, 71 school districts, 110 fire districts, and numerous other independent taxing jurisdictions.

Suffolk County has been at the epicenter of the COVID 19 crisis, which has left economic ruin in its wake in addition to the devastating impact on public health. In a matter of weeks, tens of thousands of Suffolk county residents have lost their jobs and thousands of small businesses have been brought to the brink of total destruction. While the County has mounted an aggressive multi-faceted response to the pandemic, the near shutdown of the regional economy is having significant negative impacts on the County's fiscal condition limiting our ability to provide homeowners the temporary property tax relief that they desperately need.

In addition to the extreme strain on our resources COVID 19 has caused, a New York State law requires that Suffolk County backstop subordinate taxing jurisdictions by making them whole for any delinquencies that result from non-payment by individual property taxpayers, exacerbating the County's financial position. To weather the financial storm and economic disruption caused by the pandemic, it is critical that the County have access to the Municipal Liquidity Facility, which was established specifically to assist cities and counties that face cash flow issues resulting from increased expenses and revenue shortfalls.

Unfortunately, we have come to understand that for a county to have direct access to the program, it must have a population exceeding two million residents. The threshold for cities is just one million residents. With a population of 1.48 million, Suffolk County is larger than many states, most cities, and all but a handful of our nation's 3007 counties. Clearly, the existing population restriction will negatively impact not only Suffolk County, but by extension, its towns, villages, school districts and special districts.

Suffolk County needs access to the Municipal Liquidity Facility to provide short term property tax relief for homeowners facing economic devastation and to sustain basic governmental operations including police and other law enforcement, emergency response and disaster recovery, public health, and backstopping of towns, villages and school districts. The Municipal Liquidity Facility appears to be intended to address this precise need, but the existing population threshold for counties would prevent Suffolk County from accessing the program.

Suffolk County has benefitted greatly from President Trump's leadership in making sure that our medical professionals and emergency responders have an adequate supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). We are hopeful that the administration is able to provide the same meaningful assistance to protect local taxpayers and the region's financial stability.

On behalf of the 1.48 million residents of Suffolk County, I respectfully request modification of the threshold for access to the Municipal Liquidity Facility so that the intended benefits of this important COVID 19 Recovery program can be realized in one of our nation's largest and most severely impacted counties.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Bellone', written in a cursive style.

STEVEN BELLONE
Suffolk County Executive