



Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks

May 21, 2020

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Gary C. Peters
724 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Stabenow and Peters:

As the officials tasked with administering elections in Michigan, we are committed to ensuring that every eligible voter in the state of Michigan can cast a ballot and have their vote counted. The Covid-19 pandemic presents unprecedented challenges for carrying out these responsibilities as we work to not only protect the right to vote, but also the health and safety of our voters, staff, and poll workers. Local election officials are partnering with state leaders now to ensure that our elections are prepared for these challenges. But these efforts come with a price tag. While we applaud Congress for approving \$11.3 million in election funding for Michigan through the CARES Act, we believe that this amount falls short of what is needed for safe and secure elections in 2020. Because of this, we urge you to support substantial additional funding for elections in the next coronavirus stimulus package and to ensure that local officials receive at least some portion of these funds.

With the recent state constitutional changes, 2020 will be the first presidential election in Michigan where every voter is eligible to cast a mail ballot. While municipal clerks have made many important improvements and taken many steps to prepare for an increase in absentee by mail voting over the past two years, we did not plan for a pandemic. And now, local election officials are facing considerable additional costs associated with materials, printing, and postage. Many municipalities will need more staff, supplies, equipment, and space to process the spike in mail ballots. And the need to comply with social distancing guidelines will only add to these difficulties.

At the same time, we must provide safe in-person voting locations for our residents who need or prefer these options. This will take an expansive recruiting effort to find additional poll workers, as we currently rely heavily on our older residents to staff polling places. This will also require investment in personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, and resources to create physical separation between voters and election workers.

A recent analysis released by the Alliance for Securing Democracy, the Brennan Center for Justice, Pitt Cyber, and R Street Institute estimated that it will cost Michigan an additional \$95 - \$104 million to prepare elections for the COVID-19 pandemic this year. And even with help from state election officials, local election officials will bear over 80% of these costs at a time when our budgets are already strained.

While local election officials know what it will take to run safe and secure elections this year, we need to act soon to ensure that we are prepared. We urge Congress to partner with us in this endeavor and to provide us with the resources needed to protect our democracy and public health in 2020.

Thank you for your leadership and partnership.

Respectfully,



Jeremy Howard, MiPMC/CMC
President



Chris Swope, MiPMC/MMC
1st Vice President

Cc: Members of the Michigan Congressional Delegation
Leader Mitch McConnell
Speaker Nancy Pelosi
Leader Kevin McCarthy
Leader Charles E. Schumer