

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 10, 2020

Mr. Harold Parker
Federal Co-Chair
Northern Border Regional Commission
James Cleveland Federal Building, Suite 1201
53 Pleasant Street
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Mr. Parker:

We write in response to the Northern Border Regional Commission's (NBRC) 2020 State Economic and Infrastructure Development Grant awards. We appreciate the investments the Commission has made in projects that spur economic and community development throughout rural communities in the Granite State. However, we are concerned that this latest round of funding did not include a single grant awardee from Coos or Carroll County despite numerous applications from these counties for the funds.

As you know, the Commission has received overwhelming bipartisan support in Congress through robust appropriations and reauthorization of the program. Through the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334), we worked to extend the authorization of the NBRC, increase the appropriations authorization for the program and expand the Commission's reach to additional counties in New Hampshire due to the demonstrated need in these areas. In recognition of this expanded coverage area and in order to ensure NBRC is receiving high quality and impactful applications, we also established the State Capacity Building Grant Program, a new program to help develop projects that support business retention and expansion, access to high-speed broadband, critical infrastructure development and job creation throughout the region. All the while, we advocated through the annual appropriations process to secure additional funding for the Commission in order to ensure no counties were left behind. Given these efforts to expand NBRC's reach across the Northern Forest Region, we are deeply concerned that Coos and Carroll counties were largely left out of this year's State Economic and Infrastructure Development Grant awards.

Congress also appropriated \$7 million in fiscal years 2018 and 2019 to establish the NBRC's Regional Forest Economy Partnership, a new grant program to provide additional opportunities for economic diversity and innovation to forest-based communities which are experiencing a displacement of a skilled workforce and significant negative demographic changes due to the consistent decline of the forest products industry. New Hampshire is the second most forested state in the United States; however, the 2019 Regional Forest Economy Partnership awards did not include a single grant awardee from the Granite State.

Continued federal investment in Coos and Carroll County is critical to encouraging economic development and job growth in those communities. This includes providing economic development tools and resources made possible through NBRC's State Economic and Infrastructure Development Grant and

Regional Forest Economy Partnership awards. By neglecting these two counties, NBRC is endangering the region's capacity for improving high-impact community economic development projects that support business retention and expansion, access to high-speed broadband, critical infrastructure development and job creation. This trend must be immediately reversed. Therefore, we respectfully request your responses to the following questions:

- 1) How is the NBRC working with its partners to ensure strong projects are developed for consideration?
- 2) What actions will the NBRC make moving forward to ensure that available funding is fairly distributed across eligible counties in the Granite State?
- 3) What additional assistance is NBRC providing to unsuccessful applicants to strengthen their projects going forward?
- 4) How is the NBRC working with state partners to ensure that the goals of the State Capacity Building Grant Program are being effectively executed?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We remain committed to working with you to ensure the continued success of NBRC and all New Hampshire communities that seek to participate in this program.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

Cc: Governor Chris Sununu, Northern Border Regional Commission State Co-Chair
Taylor Caswell, Commissioner, NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs