

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 24, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

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

As you develop future legislation to help communities respond to the pressing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we respectfully request that you include dedicated resources for the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC). Investments from the NBRC have significantly improved the infrastructure and quality of life in rural parts of our states, spurring economic growth, job creation and community development. Congress should provide additional funding to expand the capacity of this important program to help communities cope with and recover from this public health emergency.

Established in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-234), the NBRC is a federal-state partnership that provides economic and infrastructure development assistance to 60 rural counties in New Hampshire, Vermont, New York and Maine. Since its creation, the NBRC partnership has invested more than \$55 million in 248 projects that have helped to create jobs, reduce poverty and unemployment and limit outmigration in Northern Forest communities. These investments have leveraged more than \$142 million in other public and private funds.

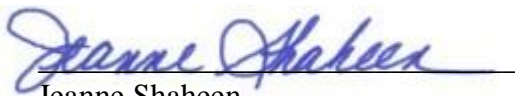
The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges for communities across the country, and among those most vulnerable are our rural and economically distressed communities. To date, the Commission has already received outreach about projects specific to COVID-19 response and recovery efforts for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 grant cycle. This demand is likely to extend into FY 2021 as communities continue to grapple with the economic challenges posed by the public health crisis. The wide-ranging economic effects of COVID-19 are also projected to hamper communities' ability to access local matching funds for NBRC grants, with existing grantees reporting that their source of local funding has dried up.

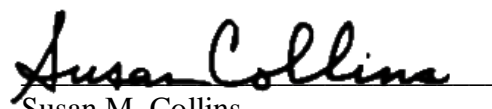
Additional resources will be important to ensuring the Commission can help communities fund and complete existing projects, respond to new challenges and build for a post-pandemic economy, as well as leverage existing federal and community partnerships. Given this need, we respectfully request that you include dedicated funding for the NBRC in any future relief package. While the Commission's efforts are uniquely tailored to meet the needs of each community in the Northern Forest region, we recognize areas specific to the current mission and expertise of NBRC that will be particularly critical for communities in need:

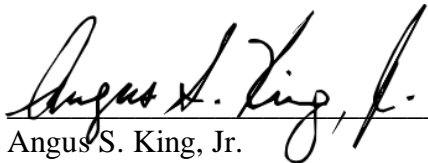
- **Economic and Infrastructure Development.** Providing economic and infrastructure development assistance to projects in economically distressed communities is essential to the NBRC's mission. In the last year alone, the Commission supported 45 projects, including efforts to provide workforce training and modernize critical infrastructure in the Northern Forest region. Additional funding would ensure that the Commission can support current projects that are struggling to secure local matching funds, as well as fund additional projects that contribute to COVID-19 recovery efforts.
- **Broadband Planning and Connectivity.** The current public health emergency has further exposed the stark disparity between communities that have access to high-speed internet and those that do not. As our constituents transition to remote learning, teleworking and online medical appointments, access to reliable and affordable broadband is a necessity. NBRC is well positioned to deploy additional funding to help communities conduct broadband planning, capacity building and feasibility studies, as well as acquire equipment that can be deployed quickly to connect communities to the internet.
- **Revolving Loan Fund.** One of the most pressing problems in local business development, and a significant contributing factor to local economic distress, is credit availability. Administered by nonprofits and municipalities, the NBRC Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program provides small businesses with much-needed financial assistance. Bolstering funding for NBRC would further support the work of the RLF program to help meet the needs of small businesses in the region as they respond to and recover from the public health crisis.

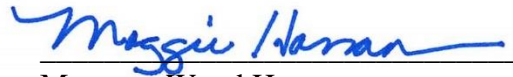
We appreciate your consideration of this important request and look forward to working with you to ensure Northern Forest communities have the resources they need to respond to this pressing public health emergency.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator


Susan M. Collins
United States Senator


Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator


Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator


Bernard Sanders
United States Senator


Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

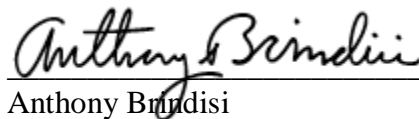

Peter Welch
Member of Congress


Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress


Chris Pappas
Member of Congress


Jared Golden
Member of Congress


Elise Stefanik
Member of Congress


Anthony Brindisi
Member of Congress


John Katko
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Nita M. Lowey, Chairwoman, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations