



May 6, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy P. Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin O. McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators McConnell and Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Representative McCarthy:

On behalf of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), I am writing to express the urgent need for federal assistance to support the continuing operations of state and local law enforcement agencies as they confront COVID-19 and its impact on their communities. Throughout this unprecedented crisis, law enforcement agencies and their officers have continued their mission to protect the public. However, doing so has required police agencies to dramatically adjust their operations and has significantly impacted the health and safety of police officers.

Initial studies have shown that this pandemic has had, and will likely continue to have, a devastating impact on the budgets of state and local governments. Although we have seen times of significant economic austerity in the past, we have never witnessed anything of this magnitude. Surveys have shown that due to this crisis, the vast majority of law enforcement agency budgets will be decimated, resulting in layoffs, reductions in salaries, decreases in funding available for training and equipment, and much more. As our officers courageously engage amid this crisis, putting themselves in harm’s way, now is not the time to accept reductions in public safety measures. Moreover, as we begin to transition into the next operational phase, we recognize that additional resources will be necessary to avoid a reduction of law enforcement officers in our communities.

For these reasons, state and local law enforcement agencies urgently need assistance from the federal government to sustain operations and prioritize the safety of their officers and the community. Before

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Chief Steven R. Casstevens
Buffalo Grove, IL, Police Department

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Chief Paul M. Cell
Montclair State University, NJ, Police Department

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Executive Director / Chief Executive Officer
Vincent Talucci, CAE
Alexandria, VA

Deputy Executive Director / Chief Operating Officer
Terrence M. Cunningham
Alexandria, VA

the onset of COVID-19, law enforcement was struggling mightily to recruit, hire, and retain officers. This is demonstrated in a recently conducted survey of agencies by the IACP; 78% of responding agencies reported having difficulty recruiting qualified candidates and a quarter (25%) of the responding agencies reported having to reduce or eliminate certain agency services, units, or positions because of staffing difficulties.

As COVID-19 continues to negatively impact communities, the physical and psychological toll on first responders will compound. With agencies across the country struggling to be fully staffed, this puts an overwhelming burden on law enforcement officers through increased workloads and constant exposure to trauma, which causes additional stress and burnout. In recent years, more police officers have died by suicide than were killed in the line of duty; the potentially long-lingering impacts of the pandemic will likely further exacerbate this tragic trend.

With these staggering challenges as context, the anticipated cuts to state and local budgets will only set the profession further behind. The projected budgetary woes will jeopardize the health and safety of the profession and threaten essential public safety services.

As Congress and the Administration move forward in developing assistance programs for state and local governments, there are two key principles that should be applied to law enforcement assistance funding:

- First, resources should be made directly to law enforcement agencies. Direct funding will ensure that the funds are properly used for law enforcement purposes and not diverted to other agencies with non-law enforcement missions.
- Second, the allowable uses of these funds should be as flexible as possible to allow police leaders to address the unique needs of their states and communities. For example, funding should be authorized to maintain personnel, support operational costs, the purchase and maintenance of personal protective equipment, enhanced officer safety and wellness programs, training, expanded use of technology, and costs associated with planning and conducting regional operations, including multi-jurisdictional task forces.

On behalf of IACP's more than 31,000 members, I urge Congress to act swiftly to support state and local law enforcement with the funding necessary to keep our communities and officers safe. The IACP stands ready to assist you as we continue our important work together and we thank you for your attention to this most pressing issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Steven R. Casstevens". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chief Steven R. Casstevens
President, IACP