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February 11, 2021

Governor Tim Walz
130 State Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155

Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan
130 State Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senate Minority Leader Susan Kent
2227 Senate Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka
3113 Senate Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Speaker Melissa Hortman
463 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt
267 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Julie Rosen
Chair, Senate Finance
2113 Senate Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Warren Limmer
Chair, Senate Judiciary and Public Safety
3221 Senate Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Rena Moran
Chair, House Ways and Means
449 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Carlos Mariani
Chair, Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform
381 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Walz and Legislative Leaders:

We renew our request to include as a priority for the 2021 session the passage of the \$3 million appropriation for local government emergency management planning and preparedness activities and capital purchases this session. The Emergency Management Readiness Proposal, initially introduced in 2019, is a bipartisan bill sponsored this session by Rep. Marquart (HF499), and Sens. Weber, Eken, Mathews, Rosen and Ingebrigtsen (SF534).

This funding request is a priority for the: Association of Minnesota Emergency Managers, Minnesota Rural Counties Association, Association of Minnesota Counties, Minnesota Inter-County Association and Tribal Governments.

The \$3,000,000 increase beginning in fiscal year 2022 is requested to be added as a base appropriation from the general fund to the commissioner of public safety for the director of the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division (HSEM) to award grants in equal amounts (approximately \$30,000) to emergency management departments in the 87 counties, 11 federally recognized tribes, and four cities of the first class, for planning and preparedness activities, including capital purchases. The bill also provides that current local funding for emergency management and preparedness activities may not be supplanted by the state funds. The need for these funds is more critical than ever this year, due to the burden placed on local governments due to COVID-19.

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The federal EMPG grants are 50% of the county funds for emergency management and preparedness activities and they currently receive no state funding. All of these local governments must meet the same requirements regardless of the size of their budgets, placing a particular hardship on rural entities. Our smallest and poorest units of government desire to provide their citizens the same level of preparedness as the largest and wealthiest communities but there is no equity in funding and staffing to ensure this goal is achieved.

The majority of our rural emergency managers have no staff or wear multiple hats themselves; as an example, some of our county emergency managers are not only handling daily preparedness for both natural and manmade disasters, but also managing the duties of Safety Officer, Planning and Zoning, Parks, Solid Waste or various Sheriff's Office and Fire Chief's duties. Of course, now EM duties have been expanded to assist in the fight against COVID-19, which has meant adding additional duties in many of our counties such as:

- Organizing and providing Incident Command System assistance to Local Public Health during the COVID-19 response.
- Providing guidance to county administration and the county board on mitigation strategies for the response.
- Actively acquiring and distributing PPE and hand sanitizer to public safety agencies, and other organizations in the county.
- Working with various organizational structures (Healthcare Coalition, Department of Health, City Government, HSEM, etc.) in various cross organizational projects during this response. Example: Finding sites for Alternate Care Sites.
- Working with private industry partners with their response to COVID-19 (Examples: day cares, pork producers, schools).
- Assisting in developing their response to COVID-19 housing needs and in some cases assisting in getting suspected COVID-19 homeless persons to shelter when possible.

This bill provides an opportunity for the state to pay its portion of the planning, preparedness and disaster response programs it requires of local and tribal governments. We hope you agree these funding needs should be considered essential to carrying out the local public safety programs required under the law.

Respectfully,



Garry Johanson
Past President
Association of
Minnesota
Emergency Managers



Matt Massman
Executive Director
Minnesota Inter-
County Association



Julie Ring
Executive Director
Association of
Minnesota Counties



Luke Johnson
Chair
Minnesota Rural
Counties



Robert Deschampe
Chairman
Grand Portage Band
of Lake Superior
Chippewa

Cc: Senator Bill Weber
Representative Paul Marquart
Commissioner John Harrington