

GREG PENCE
6TH DISTRICT, INDIANA

**TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE**

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON RAILROADS, PIPELINES,
AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
PUBLIC BUILDINGS, AND EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, EURASIA, ENERGY,
AND ENVIRONMENT



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1406

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March 21, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

As you consider the next legislative package to offer relief for American families in response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), I strongly urge you to include economic solutions to address the unique needs of rural communities.

Hoosiers living in rural areas of Indiana's 6th District will be disproportionately impacted by the economic distress caused by COVID-19. Rural communities are vital to our agricultural industry and are heavily reliant on the success of small businesses. These Americans also often live beyond the reach of standard health care establishments. Considering the livelihood and health of rural communities in Indiana and across the country, it is of critical importance that this package delivers rural assistance to avoid an economic catastrophe that can last far longer than the virus. We must address the unique needs of Hoosiers living in rural communities to keep America prosperous for generations to come.

The health and safety of Hoosiers is my number one priority. At a time when access to health services is of the utmost importance, rural hospitals are having to close their doors and limit their workforce due to the unanticipated financial burdens of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The facilities that provide essential health care services for our most vulnerable Hoosiers are crucial in the fight to end the COVID-19 pandemic in the rural communities across Indiana's 6th District. In addition, I appreciate the recognition of telemedicine as a vital component of our healthcare infrastructure during this crisis due to the ability to extend care to far reaches of our rural communities. During this global pandemic, we have witnessed the ability of telehealth services to offer alternatives to a waiting room and limit the strain on our health care system. Unfortunately, too many of our rural communities fall on the wrong side of the digital divide. As you may know, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and private industry have done a laudable job in the past few weeks to expand access for millions of Americans to keep us all connected. This package is an opportunity to foster this beneficial relationship by reforming regulatory barriers to connect rural Americans that may not otherwise have broadband access.

The continued success of our rural communities is inextricably linked to our nation's agriculture supply chain. Year after year, Indiana proves to be a national leader in poultry, corn, soybean, and hog production. While Hoosier farmers continue to put in the work during this critical time, supporting our agriculture industry is essential to maintaining our nation's food supply. Should these farmers and rural communities experience catastrophic economic damage, the effects will reverberate nationwide. This legislation should provide agricultural producers with the resources and regulatory relief to keep operations viable.

COVID-19 will have a devastating impact on the over 500,000 small businesses in Indiana if we do not act now. As the negotiations on a third relief package continue, I urge the Congress to do all it can to ensure that small businesses across rural America have financing resources available to re-open their doors at the end of this crisis. While tax credits can relieve financial burdens on business owners, we need to make sure that businesses can continue serving rural communities in the midst of economic uncertainty.

Thank you for your consideration of rural America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'GP', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Greg Pence
Member of Congress