Senator Jeff Merkley  
131 NW Hawthorne Ave., Suite 208  
Bend, OR, 97703

Senator Merkley,

Thank you for your leadership during these challenging times. Deschutes County is grateful for your support of Oregon’s 36 counties, our state, and the people of Oregon. As you are considering the next COVID-19 relief package, Deschutes County asks you to support dedicated and robust funding for county governments provided for in the American Rescue Package.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on budgets; State, county, city, special district, tribe, business, or personal—everyone’s revenue reality has dramatically changed.

As you know, counties are frontline responders in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. As the local public health authority, we provide critical services to Oregonians while working tirelessly to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of our residents, every day of every year. During the pandemic, we are direct providers of contact tracing, testing, vaccinations, and critical services that support community hospitals.

Counties go above and beyond to meet the needs of their residents. Counties are working to bridge critical gaps for Oregonians and have, among other things have:

- Stood up support for business as local economies are feeling the crippling effects of the pandemic;
- Worked with childcare providers to set up resources for parents trying to navigate the pandemic and providing for their families;
- Addressed housing, homelessness, and quarantine/isolation needs; and
- Sought solutions to broadband infrastructure to help transition our communities during this rapid-paced shift in technology.

**A direct allocation to counties in the next COVID-19 relief package means we can continue to deliver more efficient, effective services to Oregonians.** The American Rescue Plan contains $350 billion in critical aid to state, local, and territorial governments and recognizes the vital role counties play as frontline responders in mitigating and slowing the spread of virus and providing everyday services to Oregonians.

Please support the direct assistance to counties in the American Rescue Plan. When funds are accessible to local governments, we are able to support strategic and local community priorities in the most flexible and efficient way.

Sincerely,

The Deschutes County Board of Commissioners

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Anthony DeBone  
Chair

Phil Chang  
Vice Chair

Patti Adair  
Commissioner