

COVID-19 public health emergency – Response & relief city legislative priorities

Washington cities and towns have a unique role to play in responding to any emergency and they have been particularly involved in keeping their communities safe during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Cities and towns have been impacted significantly due to costs for emergency response and loss of revenue from the dramatic impact the emergency has had on our state's economy. Regardless of these impacts, cities and towns are committed to partnering with the state to keep our communities safe during this unprecedented challenge.

As the Legislature considers necessary actions to address the impacts of COVID-19 on our state, we ask the Legislature to give priority support for cities and towns in the following areas:

- **Financial support**
 - Maintain critical state-shared revenues that provide funding for essential public services.
 - Provide fiscal relief to cities hard-hit with costs for emergency response and loss of tax revenue.
- **Fiscal flexibility**
 - Provide flexibility within existing restricted revenues to allow cities to use funds where they are most needed right now.
- **Regulatory relief**
 - Continue the emergency action taken by the Governor to provide flexibility on deadlines for permitting and land use timelines. Cities hard-hit by this emergency may still be experiencing staffing shortages and backlogs that will impact their ability to comply with typical statutory deadlines.
- **City-owned utility support**
 - Allow city-owned utilities that have waived late fees and shut-offs an extension of their ability to collect outstanding debt so that they can work with ratepayers to extend payment plans without impacting the financial viability of the utility or raising rates on other customers.
 - Provide funding to help offset losses related to forgiving late fees and delinquent accounts for those customers hard-hit by the emergency.
- **Economic stimulus**
 - Investing in public infrastructure projects is one of the best ways to support economic stimulus as infrastructure investments have a positive economic multiplier with the creation of family-wage jobs and support increased economic activity.

Cities also support efforts to help the most vulnerable residents and our small businesses, including:

- Programs to provide emergency rental assistance and emergency housing.
- Programs to provide emergency assistance to small businesses.
- Program to provide emergency assistance to childcare providers.