

United States Senate

December 22, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

President-elect Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Office of the President Elect
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear President-Elect Biden:

I commend the leadership of the Biden-Harris Transition in preparing to take office and strengthen our Nation's response to the deadly coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic that has tragically killed more than 315,000 Americans. To support this effort, I respectfully request that shortly after you are sworn in to become our Nation's 46th Commander in Chief, you take decisive action to establish a new policy of the United States Government that provides a 100 percent Federal cost-share for all Title 32 activations of National Guard members responding to the COVID-19 public health crisis for the duration of the response effort. Issuing such an order on day one of the Biden-Harris administration would be welcomed by Governors across our country and send a strong message that our Nation is once again being led by a President of the United States who understands that a national emergency requires a fully- and predictably-funded national response.

The Trump administration's short-sighted decision earlier this year to nickel-and-dime Governors by reducing the Federal cost-share to only 75 percent for States' use of Title 32 activations to support COVID-19 response efforts was misguided. Cutting off desperately needed Federal support for National Guard activations only compounded the stress on individual States struggling to combat rising case counts, increasing hospitalizations and tragic deaths – while addressing revenue shortfalls that are the inevitable result of reductions in economic activity during an uncontrolled deadly pandemic.

Members of the National Guards represent the best of America, dutifully answering their communities' calls for help in Illinois and throughout the country. The National Guard is providing lifesaving assistance by setting up field hospitals, running testing sites and assisting in long-term care facilities, among other critical efforts. Moving forward, the National Guard will be a vital force multiplier in enhancing vaccine distribution efforts. However, optimizing this assistance will require the Federal Government to provide Governors with confidence that this valuable Federal assistance will be covered by Federal dollars for the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Authorizing a 100 percent Federal cost-share for Title 32 activations that remains in effect during all COVID-19 response and recovery efforts will provide much-needed confidence and certainty to all 50 States, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories. This presidential action would also keep faith with members of the National Guard, who deserve access to all Federal benefits rightfully earned as they help Americans respond to a deadly pandemic away from their families and civilian jobs. Thank you in advance for your consideration of my urgent request.

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator