Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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MICHAEL
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SECRETARY

To: Chief Executives of Massachusetts Cities and Towns
From: Michael J. Heffernan, Secretary of Administration and Finance
Date: May 14, 2020
RE: Fiscal Year 2020 Aid to Municipalities for COVID-19 Costs

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is preparing to distribute federal dollars from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CvRF) to municipalities for specific COVID-19 response costs, consistent with parameters established by the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (the "CARES" Act) and guidance from the US Treasury Department. This memo summarizes the Commonwealth's approach to providing money through the CvRF to municipalities.

The distribution announced today, adjusted for funds paid directly by the federal government to Boston and Plymouth County, represents 25% of the state's allocation from the Coronavirus Relief Fund. We anticipate that in most cases, these funds will be sufficient to address incurred or expected eligible COVID-related expenses, while maintaining necessary flexibility to allocate additional funds if unanticipated needs arise, or if federal rules change.

The key aspects of this approach include:

- **Immediate Support for Incurred or Expected Expenses:** Municipalities may apply for resources to address eligible COVID-19 response costs that are already incurred or expected in Fiscal Year 2020. These funds will help address any existing deficits in Fiscal Year 2020, thereby avoiding the need to use reserves to fund a deficit or carry one into Fiscal Year 2021.
- **Cashflow Relief:** These resources can help ease municipal cashflow pressures.
- **Federal Revenue Optimization:** By seeking FEMA reimbursements at the state and municipal level, the Commonwealth and municipalities can work together to maximize federal resources available for Massachusetts to address the public health crisis.
- **Compliance Risk Management:** Accounting for COVID-19 costs is complicated by a mix of revenue sources (federal, state) and the still-evolving federal guidance about how to spend and track the money. Clear processes and documentation can mitigate the risk of federal audit challenges to the uses of these funds. If you have questions about how to track and account for these funds, contact the auditing firm that completes your annual audit or your Division of Local Services (DLS) field rep.

Please refer to the guidance distributed by the Executive Office for Administration and Finance for detailed information on this approach (https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-resources-and-guidance-for-municipal-officials).

If the federal law or relevant guidelines materially change, we expect to revisit this distribution plan.