The Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection and Schools (HEALS) Act unveiled by the U.S. Senate leadership on Monday afternoon would send a second round of stimulus checks, reduce unemployment benefits and increase school funding but, as proposed, fails to include any new financial assistance for state and local governments. This proposal will kick off negotiations between the Senate, House and Administration on a final relief package, hoping to be passed before Congress departs for August recess.

NYCOM believes that this opening salvo by the Senate is out of touch with the grim reality facing communities large and small across New York, which mayors of all political stripes have highlighted over the past several months. As local leaders and economists in New York and throughout the nation have made clear, there will be no national economic recovery without a strong commitment from the federal government to address the staggering revenue shortfalls and skyrocketing costs that local governments have been forced to incur due to the bipartisan shutdown of our economies and communities.

While the HEALS Act offers no new funding to local or state governments, it would provide greater flexibility in how recipients (i.e., states and municipalities over 500,000 in population) can use their monies from the CARES Act's Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF), including backfilling a portion of lost revenue. The bill says that CRF monies can be used to cover a revenue shortfall if the government has distributed 25 percent of the money downstream to local governments. Additionally, a government may only use 25 percent of its CRF allocation to backfill lost revenue.

Flexibility to use CARES Act funds, while welcome, will not solve the problems facing NYCOM’s member cities and villages. The CARES Act allocated only a small fraction of what is needed to prevent layoffs, cancellation of job-creating infrastructure projects, and interruption of essential municipal services. The funding made available for local governments thus far is woefully insufficient.

As you may recall, the House's position on aid to state and local governments is embodied in the HEROES Act, which the House approved in May (and the Senate rejected immediately). The House legislation would provide $375 billion in new aid to local governments to be split 50/50 between cities/villages/towns and counties over two years. In New York alone, the HEROES Act would provide $7.3 billion in new aid to municipalities. The Senate's new HEALS Act proposal would provide none.

Now is the time for every one of NYCOM's 580 members to get engaged. We NEED you to call your senators and House members to reiterate to them how important funding is for your city/village. If you have not yet called, please call. If you have already called, call again. And let your local media know the significance of this funding to your community. If you have any questions or need help reaching your elected officials, please email NYCOM Executive Director Peter Baynes at peter@nycom.org
The State Legislature held a one-week special session last week to give final approval to 220 pieces of legislation that cover a wide variety of topics. Below is a listing of several bills impacting local governments that the Senate and Assembly have approved but have not yet sent to the Governor for his action.

**Public Service Commission Review of Broadband and Fiber Optic Services -** *A.6679-C* (Ryan) / *S.8805* (Metzger) – *NYCOM Supports*
Would require the Public Service Commission to assess the availability, affordability, and reliability of high-speed internet and broadband services in New York State; determine the practical, regulatory, and statutory barriers to the provision of such services; and coordinate with internet service providers to prioritize access to broadband and fiber optic connectivity in communities that have experienced negative economic and social impacts due to the absence, insufficiency, or inadequacy of high-speed internet access.

**Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention -** *A.9779-A* (Thiele) / *S.7589-B* (Gaughran) – *NYCOM Supports*
In response to the difficulty volunteer departments are experiencing to recruit and retain members, this bill would establish a State task force to examine and make recommendations on how government can assist and help strengthen the volunteer fire service.

**Fire and Emergency Evacuation Violations -** *A.3343* (Zebrowski) / *S.1714* (Brooks) – *NYCOM Supports*
Would amend Executive Law § 382 adding a new subdivision 4 which would provide that a civil penalty can be imposed on building owners who knowingly violate the Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code or any lawful order obtained thereunder for impeding a person's egress from the building during a fire or other emergency evacuation.

**Modification of the Residential-Commercial Urban Exemption Program -** *A.8091-A* (Magnarelli) / *S.5254-B* (Breslin) – *NYCOM Supports*
Would amend the § 485-a property tax exemption for mixed-use development to ensure the program is serving the purpose for which it was intended which is to provide a property tax incentive for the rehabilitation of underutilized buildings.

**Operational Plan for Public Health Emergencies -** *A.10832* (Abbate) / *S.8617-B* (Gounardes) – *NYCOM Opposes*
Would mandate public employers to adopt a comprehensive plan, within 30 days of the bill being signed into law, with input from employee unions (to which the employer must provide a written response to each recommendation offered), for operations in the event of a declared public health emergency involving a communicable disease. Such plan would have to include a listing of all essential and non-essential employees and a protocol the employer would follow in order to enable all non-essential employees to telecommute.

**Contact Information for Zombie Properties -** *A.6976* (Wallace) / *S.4190* (Kennedy) – *NYCOM Supports*
Would require that a mortgage servicer's name and telephone number be listed for any mortgage foreclosure of a one- to four-family residential property in a Notice of Pendency (Lis Pendens), the Order of Reference, and the Judgement of Sale. With this information listed, municipal officials will have a more efficient way to contact the loan servicer to ensure that maintenance obligations are enforced.

**Increasing Census 2020 Self-Response Rates**
Census 2020 operations and schedules have been delayed by the COVID-19 crisis. In the coming days the US Census Bureau will deploy a national effort to raise awareness about census participation to help increase self-response rates ahead of in-person enumeration. As of yesterday, New York State's self-response rate is 57.9%, compared with the national average of 62.3%. As you know, our state risks missing out on billions of dollars in federal investments and Congressional representation if our response rates are low. We need both federal investments and Congressional representation now more than ever.
The New York Immigration Coalition together with NALEO, Hispanic Federation, Asian American Federation, Census Counts and NY Counts 2020 have coordinated a briefing for municipal officials on how your offices can help increase Census 2020 self-response rates in the state ahead of the start of the US Census Bureau’s in-person enumeration the week of August 11. The briefing will be held online on Wednesday, July 29 at 10AM and again at 4:30PM. You can register for the briefing at 10:00AM or 4:30PM (note the registration links are specific to the time).