January 11, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader          Minority Leader
United States Senate      United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510     Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf the National League of Cities (NLC) and the 19,000 cities, towns and villages and the over 270,000,000 citizens we serve, I am writing to share our deep dismay that the partial government shutdown has not yet ended, despite the clear negative consequences to our communities and the economy. We urge you to do what city leaders do every day — come together, compromise and get the job done.

The shutdown is having real-life consequences in our communities and our economy. And each day those consequences appear to grow as it becomes harder to purchase a new home, take out a small business loan, and provide services for veterans, seniors, homeless, and other “vulnerable” groups.

Rental subsidies for individuals and families from the Department of Housing and Urban Development are running out of money. First time home buyers are having difficulty closing on their Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and USDA backed loans because offices are closed. Local entrepreneurs are not able to get small business loans to start up or expand their businesses because the Small Business Administration is closed. The E-Verify program has been shut down preventing local employers from hiring new employees because they are unable to check prospective employees’ immigration status. Cities, towns and villages are seeing declines in sales tax revenues because of reduced tourism to national parks. This list goes on and on.

We agree that Congress and the Administration need to fix the nation’s broken immigration system. However, shutting down the federal government is not going to get us any closer to solving that issue. We have an opportunity to improve our immigration system, but the only way to do it is to commit to compromising and getting the job done. The American people should not suffer because of Congress’s inability to resolve its political differences.

We are concerned that the open-ended nature of the current shutdown, with no end in sight, could cost billions in economic development and impede the progress we have made since the great recession. A strong federal-local
partnership for economic growth depends on a well-functioning federal government that is open for business. We urge you to end the shutdown now by either passing the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019 (H.R. 21) or other legislation that will immediately re-open the shuttered federal agencies.

Sincerely,

Karen Freeman-Wilson
Mayor, Gary, Indiana
President, National League of Cities