May 12, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

On behalf of the nation’s 19,000 cities, villages and towns, we urge you to consider local elected officials as a resource in helping to solve our nation’s most pressing challenges that are essential to the success of your Administration. We write today with two specific requests that can strengthen the federal-local partnership in furtherance of our mutual goals of growing the economy, creating jobs, and building an America where all families can live and prosper in equitable, safe and vibrant communities.

First, we ask you to appoint a municipal leader within the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs that can serve as the critical voice of local government on policy matters. Opening up a direct channel for local government elected leaders offers the opportunity to partner on federal policy and rulemaking opportunities, which among other things can provide an avenue of support through our constituents and help identify and eliminate harmful or burdensome requirements, such as unfunded mandates.

Every day, residents put their trust in local government to deliver important services, from public safety and housing, to streets and emergency response. Because of this direct connection to the American people, cities and towns are a critical intergovernmental partner in the decision making process. Local governments often serve as the co-regulators in implementing federal policies, and therefore should be at the table when policies and rules are being crafted to provide an important perspective on ensuring that they are effective, implementable, offer local flexibility, avoid a “one-size-fits-all” approach.

To that end, another key priority for cities and towns and an opportunity for support and collaboration is improving our nation’s infrastructure. As you work to craft an infrastructure proposal to improve our nation’s airports, bridges, highways, ports, tunnels and waterways, which is a critical part of any growth strategy, we ask you to consider the following local government principles:
• America’s cities are paying their fair share: over two-thirds of all public infrastructure projects in the United States are locally financed by municipal bonds.

• While the demands on America’s infrastructure grow each year, federal funding has fallen to historically low levels, placing the economic and physical well-being of our cities and towns in jeopardy.

• City leaders are best positioned to identify where infrastructure needs are greatest, and should be given a stronger voice in how limited federal dollars are spent.

Specifically, we ask you to propose an infrastructure package that protects the tax exemption for municipal bonds; includes direct funding for local governments and uses existing mechanisms and programs for funding and financing; includes transportation, water and broadband; is forward looking and makes investments that are built for the 21st century; is accessible for small and large cities; and includes workforce development.

Cities and towns are the force driving our economy and they are growing rapidly. Ninety percent of the U.S. GDP comes from metro regions, with the 30 largest accounting for half. A century ago, just 14 percent of Americans lived in cities, today that is up to 80 percent of Americans living in cities and towns of all sizes. Cities are where America comes together to live, work and prosper. By empowering cities and towns, you will be able to further tap the strength of the American economy.

We urge you to partner with local elected officials to ensure the success of your Administration. I have asked Irma Esparza Diggs, Director of Federal Advocacy, and Carolyn Berndt, Program Director for Sustainability, to follow up with your staff to answer any questions. In the meantime, Irma may be reached directly at (202) 626-3176 or by email at diggs@nlc.org and Carolyn may be reached directly at (202) 626-3101 or by email at berndt@nlc.org.

Sincerely,

Clarence E. Anthony
CEO and Executive Director