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When the Message Really Matters

When communicating with the President of the United States and leaders of the U.S. Congress, prudence requires making one's case with data and clarity. Let's take a closer look at the nonprofit coalition letter discussed at the top of this newsletter to see if prudence would be satisfied.

The first question is **why send the letter at all?** Quite simply, history has shown that unless nonprofits have a seat at the policymaking table, we are forgotten. There are lots of squeaky wheels from for-profit businesses and government groups demanding attention at those policy tables, so if nonprofits are politely going about our work of serving our communities while assuming policymakers will notice, then we're left out of any policy solutions. The nonprofit coalition letter is written to demonstrate the unique contributions of nonprofits – to demand notice and a seat at the policy table.

Another question is **why nonprofits feel they should receive relief?** The letter answers this question by noting that while the COVID relief enacted in 2020 was helpful in many ways, it fell far short of what is truly required. For instance, the 2020 relief included forgivable loans for some charitable nonprofits, but not all – most notably nonprofits with more than 500 employees that have the capacity to serve more people. The coalition letter further underscores that last-year's relief awkwardly inserted “nonprofits into existing or predetermined programs designed for for-profit businesses,” causing unintended consequences by not being tailored to

the realities of nonprofit operations. It makes the case for specific, dedicated policy solutions that will enable nonprofits to help rebuild our communities. The letter warns, “Without immediate relief from Congress and the Administration, charitable organizations will not have the capacity or resources to be the backbone of communities upon which the American people rely.”

Data usually help in making the case; **what data are presented that show how nonprofits have fared?** The letter explains that the pre-pandemic nonprofit workforce of 12.3 million dedicated employees has [lost nearly 930,000 nonprofit jobs](#), including 51,000 in December 2020, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data. It also lays out that nonprofit revenues are likely to decline sharply in 2021 as individuals are less able to make charitable donations and “state and local governments make draconian spending cuts to human services and other programs frequently performed by charitable nonprofits.” The letter states, “We anticipate that 2021 will be even more devastating to the work of nonprofits,” thus reinforcing the point that relief is needed now to save and restore jobs, a clear priority of policymakers.

So **what are nonprofits seeking?** Here, the letter calls for relief in four essential areas, building on prior legislation and nonprofit community letters. Combined, the four policy “asks” address the broad challenges and concerns of most charitable nonprofits, whether large or small, urban or rural, and regardless of subsector. For each issue, the letter stresses why the requested policy is important to charitable organizations, how it will support COVID relief and recovery, and what the legislation should specifically provide.

As noted above, the letter alone is just the first step. Now, nonprofits from coast to coast and from all subsectors need to transform the letter’s words into a mighty roar demanding the attention of policymakers so they recognize the irreplaceable roles you play in their congressional districts and states. America needs its charitable nonprofits to be strong to get us through the multiple crises our nation is currently enduring. [Sign On Now!](#)