April 15, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
1705 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Support for IT Modernization to Improve COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Relief Efforts

Dear Congressional Leaders:

The undersigned organizations seek your support for stimulus relief funding for information technology (IT) modernization efforts to enable and enhance federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments' ability to carry out coronavirus-related missions, maximize productivity, improve service delivery to citizens, and enhance cybersecurity protections for critical systems.

Outdated government IT systems and processes already hinder some federal and state agencies' ability to deliver aid to new applicants for small business loans and unemployment insurance.[1] The COVID-19 pandemic also exposes the need to redouble efforts to digitize federal forms and reduce reliance

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[1] *see:* Warmbrodt, Zachary. "Small business loan program stumbles as SBA system crashes." Politico. Apr. 6, 2020. *available at:* https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/06/small-business-loan-program-system-crashes-169614 and Palmer, Ewan. "Hundreds of Florida Residents Line Up for Unemployment Benefits as Electronic Systems Crash." Newsweek. Apr. 8, 2020. *available at:* https://www.newsweek.com/coronavirus-florida-unemployment-apply-benefits-1496794

on hand-processing paperwork for high priority response and relief efforts.[2] In addition. the rapid transition to remote telework during the pandemic has also created new challenges for many government agencies, including increased cybersecurity threats, an inability to leverage commercial capabilities (which reduces program effectiveness), and important continuity of government operations.[3]

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress recognized the inadequate state of federal IT and enacted several laws to improve the management and oversight of federal technology systems.[4] Yet, despite significant support in recent years, including funding for agency telework and remote operations in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the current national emergency continues to highlight the need for additional IT investments to ensure our nation is able to effectively respond to this crisis. This includes IT investments to support telework and telemedicine, dramatic improvements citizen-facing services such as loan programs, state unemployment application processing and call centers, and to ensure that agencies at the Federal, state, and local level have modern technology capabilities and infrastructure that can scale to address exigent circumstances. To address these critical gaps, we recommend that any additional pandemic legislative relief package:

1. Provide adequate funds to modernize IT systems used by agencies working on the front lines of this pandemic and future emergency responses. Such funding should be made available for expenditure over multiple years;
2. Establish and fund a mechanism that provides federal financial support to state and local government agencies in need of IT modernization and upgrades that, in turn, will enhance the speed and effect of relief efforts for citizens, business, hospitals, and organizations in direct need during the COVID-19 and subsequent emergencies;
3. Support the Technology Modernization Fund (TMF) at an appropriations level that would allow for meaningful investment in cross-agency IT modernization initiatives; and
4. Ensure that IT modernization efforts include focused attention and investment on strengthening cybersecurity, workforce training, and process transformation.

In this new era of remote collaboration, government must take advantage of the opportunities created to modernize processes for efficiency, security, and cost savings - but must also act to reduce inherent risks associated with an increased reliance on connected technology that leaves agency networks and information vulnerable without appropriate safeguards. Congress has already made it clear that improving our digital infrastructure is a critical priority for America, and we urge you to ensure funding of the appropriate size and scope to address these obvious needs is included in any subsequent relief package.

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[2] *see:* Faler, Brian. "IRS official: Virus outbreak making it hard to implement key business tax provision." Politico. Apr. 2, 2020. *available at:* https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/02/irs-coronavirus-tax-refund-162244 and CDC. "Information for Health Departments on Reporting Cases of COVID-19." Website. *available at:* https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/reporting-pui.html, *accessed:* Apr. 8, 2020.
[3] *see:* Mazmanian, Adam "Legacy systems crumble under high demand." FCW.com. Apr. 5, 2020. *available at:* https://fcw.com/articles/2020/04/05/legacy-tech-hinders-gov-covid19.aspx and Mersol, James "The Cybersecurity Challenges in Government-wide Move to Telework." GovernmentCIO. March 25, 2020. *available at:* https://www.governmentciomedia.com/cybersecurity-challenges-government-wide-move-telework
[4] For example, the *Modernizing Government Technology (MGT) Act* (PL 115-91) and the *21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act* (PL 115-336).

We have attached a document which provides additional details and recommendations.[5] We look forward to working with both chambers on this matter that directly impacts pandemic response efforts and the delivery of relief to the public during this unprecedented time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Alliance for Digital Innovation (ADI)
Center for Procurement Advocacy (CPA)
CompTIA
Cybersecurity Coalition
Information Technology Industry Council (ITI)
Internet Association (IA)

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[5] "Principles for Federal IT Modernization in Response to the Covid-19 Outbreak"