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Outdated government IT systems and processes already hinder some federal and state agencies' ability to deliver aid to new applicants for small business loans and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

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

Principles for IT Modernization in Future Stimulus Package

Additional Tools to Support Telework and Continuity of Mission Operations

Each of the three emergency supplementals passed this year have provided for the rapid expansion of a number of new or existing government initiatives to support the nation. While some funding has been allocated for improving telework capabilities at certain agencies (such as in the recently passed CARES Act), funding for modernizing IT systems expanding, enhancing security infrastructure capabilities, and increasing the government's ability to implement effective mission delivery remains inadequate. Furthermore, it is unclear how much funding, if any, will actually be provided to support these initiatives since CARES Act appropriations for telework and IT improvements are often mixed with non-IT related items. Subsequent appropriations bills should continue to directly fund agency modernization efforts, and specifically direct agencies to support secure "telework," while expanding the definition to specifically include the following:

- **Technology Transformation:** For efforts to automate, digitalize and transform manual, labor intensive processes that increase operational resiliency and enhance security during the COVID-19 response and to enable agencies to more effectively implement commercial and emerging technology capabilities that can scale rapidly to address long term agency technology deficiencies identified during the current crisis.
- **IT Infrastructure:** To integrate, support, and secure the technology necessary to enable all forms of remote work and collaboration and to maintain operations with limited physical presence due to the social distancing required to address COVID-19. Ensure that new projects, such as smart infrastructure, are securely designed and built to operate in a pandemic environment.
- **Remote Work:** For software, digital tools around mobile device management for remote devices and desktops of all types, and training to support, manage and secure a distributed workforce using diverse and mobile tools, to improve workforce productivity and retention, and to deliver better digital tools and capabilities to citizens.
- **Secure Cloud Adoption:** As per the Federal Cloud Smart strategy, increase adoption of secure and optimized cloud computing and cloud-based collaboration tools, including those that enable rapid, multi-channel public communications, customer interaction, and data governance.
- **Federal Operations:** Promote policies and technology platforms supporting connected remote operations. Provide necessary resources for agencies implementing coronavirus-related programs to retire outdated legacy information systems, modernize their information technology systems, applications, and infrastructure with commercial capabilities that increase efficiency and improve security, and develop disaster recovery and business continuity contingencies for IT systems to enhance pandemic and national emergency response now and in the future.
- **Digital Services:** Funding and direction from Congress or the Administration to support agency delivery of modern citizen services based upon the principles of the 21st Century IDEA Act, including consolidated services, and best-in-class commercial capabilities. Require Digital First capabilities that allow for secure mobile access to and use of all federal and state websites, forms and records, automation and self-use capabilities of all citizen and business centric transactions, and bridge the divide between digital and physical capabilities.

Technology Supporting Implementation of Programs at the State and Local Level

As highlighted in numerous news stories, state and local[1] technology systems are overburdened and under-resourced to meet the current COVID-19 related surge in demand for benefits such as SBA loans, unemployment insurance, or other critical services funded by the CARES Act. In addition, integration between Federal agency systems and those at the state and local level that must work in tandem to deliver vital citizen services are often not prioritized in directing critical funding to end users. To accomplish this integration, future appropriations should strive to eliminate siloed systems and promote use of common enterprise platforms and integrated solutions to deliver state's services, and federal services that are managed by the states. Examples could include integration of systems that support program eligibility and case management for various health,

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[1] The phrase "state and local" throughout this document is meant to be inclusive of state, local, District of Columbia, territorial, and tribal governments.

Principles for IT Modernization in Future Stimulus Package

human, social and labor programs, and developing a centralized database for critical care health and nutrition elements that are needed for national security and supply chain, with encouragement for states to share necessary data. To that extent, Congress should ensure that aid to states makes available funding for IT modernization, including cybersecurity. Options may include:

- Direct aid to states providing specific funds, including enhanced match for administration of federally mandated programs to ensure that state/local agencies can effectively operationalize their IT to address demand issues while ensuring adequate security and, more importantly, to transform towards more commercial capabilities (such as commercial cloud, modern ERP systems, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, etc.).
- Fund Federal agencies that act as the pass-through for administration of benefits at the state/local level and require that systems supporting benefit allocation (ex. Department of Labor and unemployment insurance) have funds dedicated for modernization at both the Federal and state/local level.

Cybersecurity

The CARES Act did not specifically address the potential cybersecurity needs of a remote workforce. The Administration and Congress are increasingly aware of the advanced security threats in an increasingly digital world. Without robust funding for cybersecurity, remote collaboration leaves agency networks, clouds, and end points vulnerable. The next supplemental should ensure adequate funding for security, including the following:

- Increased bandwidth, remote capacity, and upgrades to virtual private networks (VPNs) and other remote connectivity (such as zero trust architectures) to enhance security between remote access devices, and the networks, systems and data of corporations and government, and to enhance security between government cloud solutions.
- Empower greater adoption of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Trusted Internet Connection 3.0 Policy, to accelerate secure cloud adoption, improved remote user experience, and security at the remote endpoint.
- Additional funds for the General Services Administration's FedRAMP program, specifically to pursue full automation of Provisional Authorities to Operate (ATOs) and to implement automated monitoring and certification processes so agencies can more quickly and securely leverage cloud capabilities at the federal and state levels.
- Increase funding to train IT executives, program managers, and industry in the understanding and management of cybersecurity risk, especially in the application of cloud technology.

Investment in Modernizing Government Technology

As an investment in immediate, agile technology transformation and as a vehicle to strategically pivot the government towards a more modern enterprise, allocating significant funding to the Technology Modernization Fund (TMF) should be prioritized. With its focus on commercial capabilities and iterative funding, funds made available now can move quickly to agencies to support critical modernization efforts and help prevent numerous technical issues identified during the current response to COVID-19. Given the criticality of the TMF, Congress should relax the pay back requirements specific to the TMF in order for agencies to effectively respond to the crisis. In addition, Congress should work with the Administration and expand opportunities for agency-specific IT Working Capital Funds (IT WCFs), including those provided for in the Fiscal Year 2021 President's Budget (Budget). Congress should consider the following:

- **TMF:** Provide full funding for the TMF at an appropriations level that would allow for meaningful investment in cross-agency IT modernization initiatives, and waive agency pay back requirements.
- **Agency Appropriations:** Provide specific IT modernization funding to federal departments and agencies on the front lines of coronavirus preparedness and recovery efforts. Such efforts should embrace the capabilities outlined in the bulleted list above and should be focused on implementing and managing programs related to preparedness or recovery efforts.
- **IT WCFs:** Add Federal agency transfer authority for establishing IT WCFs at the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Labor, Treasury, and the US Agency for International Development, consistent with the Budget.