Dear Governor Lee,

We continue to watch Covid-19 expose the fragility of our healthcare system. As a foundation that funds about 80 health-focused nonprofits in Middle Tennessee, we have a unique view into the impact that the pandemic is having on these organizations. We are writing to encourage you to bring home $1.4 billion per year in Tennesseans’ taxes to bolster our inadequate health care infrastructure and provide insurance coverage to the growing number of more than 300,000 community members in need of health care.

We fund many charitable clinics and federally qualified health centers in Middle Tennessee. While they provide top-notch primary care and internal medicine, the pandemic has revealed their limitations and further exposed gaps in care. Uninsured people still need access to hospitals and specialty care, which falls outside of the care that they provide. The clinics are not equipped to diagnose and treat COVID-19, provide intubation or critical/emergency care. Doesn’t it make more economic sense to provide all community members access to the same health infrastructure rather than creating two different and unequal systems?

The pandemic has also affected our endowment (and those of other foundations and private donors), which impacts the amount of funding that we have available to give. Philanthropy will not be in a place to support nonprofit health care at the same level, and we expect this to be the case for several years. We will have less funding to support health services, despite ever-increasing needs. As part of a comprehensive recovery plan, we strongly encourage you to use the mechanism 36 other states have used to expand health care access.

Having a skilled and healthy workforce is imperative to our economic development. Bringing home our federal dollars would provide numerous jobs when our unemployment rates are skyrocketing. This would likely be the most substantive economic development deal you could land during your tenure as Governor. Wouldn’t that be an incredible legacy to leave? Wouldn’t it be an incredible stimulus to our economy and help lead us out of this at a pace quicker than other states?

Given all these opportunities, we ask you, Gov. Lee, what is your recovery plan to bring home $1.4 billion per year in Tennesseans’ taxes to help the state’s fragile healthcare infrastructure, protect 300,000 uninsured neighbors and recapture jobs?

Sincerely,