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**Template Press Release for use by Associations, Alliances, Coalitions, Special Districts**

 **SPECIAL DISTRICT GRANT ACCESSIBILITY ACT INTRODUCED IN U.S. SENATE**

*Federal Legislation Would Open Funding Opportunities for Special Districts*

*Providing Essential Services to Nearly All of State and population Residents*

Following the successful House passage of H.R. 7525 in May, U.S. Senators Kyrsten Sinema (I-AZ) and John Cornyn (R-TX) today introduced a companion version of the *Special District Grant Accessibility Act*(SDGAA, Senate bill number to be assigned at a later date). The legislation would establish a first-ever, formal definition of “special district” in federal law and ensure communities served by these local agencies are eligible for all appropriate forms of federal financial assistance.

[Insert Quote from Association Leadership here]

Special districts are local public agencies created by community residents to deliver specialized services essential to their health, safety, economy, and well-being. Like cities and counties, special districts are public agencies; however, they provide necessary services that many cities and counties do not.

If passed, this legislation would be the first time federal law has codified a formal definition for “special district,” despite the fact these special units of local government date back to the 18th century.

In addition to codifying this definition, the legislation would require the White House Office of Management and Budget to issue guidance to federal agencies requiring special districts to be recognized as local governments for the purpose of federal financial assistance determinations.

One of the leading factors driving the need for the SDGAA is the fact that special districts were omitted in COVID-19-era legislation that provided direct federal financial assistance to local governments for coronavirus relief and response activities (namely*CARES Act* funding and *ARPA*Fiscal Recovery Fund dollars). Unlike other forms of local government, special districts were excluded from receiving direct federal aid, despite the fact that many special districts provided essential public services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, including ambulance/EMS, hospital, and open space services.

Compounding the problem, while special districts are eligible for most current federal funding opportunities, they have faced unnecessary bureaucratic barriers to accessing certain grant programs due largely to the lack of clarity absent a formal definition. The SDGAA seeks to level the playing field by ensuring that special districts and the communities they serve have access to all appropriate and relevant federal funding streams.

The bill’s first stop in the Senate is expected to be the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. If approved by the committee, the legislation would then advance to the Senate Floor.

Currently, there are more than (number) special districts in STATE, providing a range of infrastructure and essential community programs across the country including parks, water, sanitation, fire protection, ports, cemeteries, healthcare, electricity, pest control, and libraries.

For more information, visit the [National Special Districts Coalition website](https://www.nationalspecialdistricts.org/special-district-grant-accessibility-act-approved-in-house-committe).

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