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Newsworthy, Immediate, and Virtual

The stability of the nonprofit community in the midst and aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic is in doubt. The same can be true for other segments of the economy; airlines and restaurants certainly have significant challenges too and have attracted tremendous attention from policymakers and the news media. The dilemma nonprofits face is how to get the word out about the combination of lost revenues and increased demand – something airlines and restaurants aren’t experiencing. One advocacy technique gaining favor is the well-planned virtual news conference.

In recent weeks, state associations of nonprofits and their members have convened the media and other nonprofits to discuss the impact of the pandemic and public policies on organizations from all subsectors and regions of their states. First up was the **Minnesota Council of Nonprofits**, which hosted a [virtual news conference](#) with eight other nonprofits to lay out challenges faced by people nonprofits serve. Speakers expressly called on Congress to get back to work. “The crisis has not stopped doing its thing, but Congress has,” said Marie Ellis, policy director for the state association of nonprofits. Amplifying its advocacy campaign, the state association spearheaded a [letter to the congressional delegation](#) signed by more than 150 nonprofits.

Not long after the Minnesota event, the **Kentucky Nonprofit Network** (KNN) [hosted a press conference](#) to call on Senate Majority Leader McConnell and the Kentucky congressional delegation to pass a COVID-relief bill as soon as possible.

Nine nonprofit leaders joined KNN in making the case for action on the nonprofit policy priorities identified in the [new Nonprofit Community Letter](#). The comments were respectful, but emphatic: “We urge of Kentucky’s congressional delegation to not give up on Kentucky,” Danielle Clore of KNN said. “Their good work from the CARES Act must continue and they must move swiftly to include the bipartisan solutions needed by the nonprofits serving Kentuckians. As was heard today, the needs are urgent – Kentucky, and our nation, simply cannot wait.” Read the [KNN recap](#).

A variation on the theme occurred in South Carolina when **Together SC**, the state association of nonprofits, and its research partner [hosted a virtual news conference](#) to announce the results of a statewide survey, [COVID-19 and the Status of South Carolina’s Nonprofit Sector](#). A key data point that [received the national attention](#) it deserves: “29% of nonprofits in the state could not survive until the end of the year without additional financial support.” Madeleine McGee, CEO of Together SC, explained that the data provided an important perspective for state lawmakers as they currently debate how to allocate the remaining federal COVID monies.

The **North Carolina Center for Nonprofits** hosted its virtual news conference on September 15, featuring panelists representing a diverse group of nonprofits from the arts, education, health care, human services, youth development, and social services. As in other states, the speakers described the impact of the pandemic on nonprofits and the communities they serve and urged federal leaders to pass a COVID relief package to ensure nonprofits can continue helping people in communities. View the recording: [Nonprofits Call on Congress to Take Action](#).

This past week, the [Center for Non-Profits](#) in New Jersey brought together speakers from social services, the arts, and philanthropy. Each of the nonprofit professionals called on New Jersey’s U.S. Senators and Representatives, as well as state legislators, to act quickly to help New Jerseyans meet their basic needs during extremely challenging times, ensure that nonprofits are able to help people weather and recover from this unprecedented crisis,; and facilitate an equitable and faster economic recovery.

Also last week, a news conference [hosted by the Maine Association of Nonprofits](#) made clear through several speakers that without additional resources, nonprofits throughout Maine would be at risk of layoffs or potential closures. A panelist for behavioral service provider Spurwink explained that the need for services has only

increased as more adults are reporting higher substance use and mental health challenges during the pandemic. The larger nonprofit hasn't qualified for loans from the Paycheck Protection Program due to its size, but it has experienced significant cost increases for things like protective gear and technology. Learn more: [Maine Nonprofits Call For More Federal Pandemic Relief](#).

No matter the state and no matter the mission focus of the charitable nonprofit – the need for COVID relief is omnipresent. By joining together, these organizations have focused the eyes of the media and policymakers on the critical services and supports that nonprofits are providing. They are defining this new technique of the virtual news conference to rally support when it's needed the most.