

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

Thank you for acting with urgency to address the widespread impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on families, workers and businesses across the country. The members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus have collectively identified the following as top priorities for the next package to ensure we protect the health and safety of individuals, families and our economy.

Provide Immediate Cash Assistance:

- Guarantee immediate, targeted monthly payments of up to \$2,000 for each adult, and up to an additional \$1,000 for families with children for up to 6 months, with an opportunity to extend another 6 months as needed, with eligibility based upon income.
- Children under 18 in eligible households per the criteria above are eligible for the child payment if they were eligible for the 2019 Child Tax Credit, except that filers of any age (and their spouses) who claim dependents are instead eligible for the adult payment.
- Distribute checks through the IRS, Social Security, Electronic Benefits Transfer and FEMA.

Address Housing Insecurity:

- Implement a temporary, nation-wide moratorium on evictions and foreclosures for homeowners and renters.
- Provide emergency rental assistance to renters directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. With low-income workers and communities of color more likely to be living paycheck-to-paycheck, many cities across the country are already implementing similar measures to address housing insecurity.
- Increase funding for the McKinney-Vento Emergency Solution grant, the McKinney-Vento Continuum of Care grant, the FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter grant, and the Disaster Housing Assistance Program to assist those who are already homeless or housing insecure.

Provide Worker-Centered Industry Assistance:

- Condition assistance on maintaining payroll and covering other essentials, such as rent and utilities, on respecting existing collective bargaining agreements and adhering to robust paid leave policies, as included in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and CDC-directed public health guidelines.
- Prohibit the use of funds for stock buybacks, executive bonuses and dividends, and a cap on senior executive pay at no more than 50 times the pay of their median worker.

- Establish an oversight body that includes unions and other worker representatives.
- Provide support and issue regulations to ensure the integrity of collective bargaining agreements and any pension or retirement plans if a corporation seeks bankruptcy, reorganization, a merger, an acquisition, or other significant disruptions to their employment structure.

Provide Higher Education Assistance:

- Implement an immediate moratorium on all negative credit reporting and ensure a period of debt forgiveness or loan forbearance with no additional interest accrued through the crisis on all loans.
- Prohibit lenders from making loans fall due immediately after the pandemic ends.
- Ensure that any payments made or debts forgiven by the federal government toward student loan payments and interest charges count toward achieving Public Service Loan Forgiveness completion.

Support for Small Businesses and Nonprofit Organizations:

- Provide direct cash assistance or grants to small business owners and nonprofit organizations (50 employees or less) to cover lost expenses and costs such as rent, utilities, etc. during a time of forced closure or limited operations. This should cover independent contractors, sole proprietors, and gig economy workers.
- Protect small businesses and nonprofits from evictions, utility shut-offs and other impacts related to an inability to pay bills or loans as a result of forced closure or operational limits imposed by city or state officials.
- Ensure that new businesses or nonprofits that will not qualify for benefits also receive assistance.

Include Broad Expansion of Worksharing and Other Unemployment Insurance (UI) Programs:

- Require all states to offer robust work-sharing unemployment insurance programs for workers whose hours are reduced to maintain payroll and reduce layoffs. To incentivize take up, the replacement rate should be at least 80% of what an employee made in the highest two-week period.
- Extend Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) to cover self-employed individuals and others ineligible for regular UI.
- Increase the UI replacement rate to no less than 80% and provide a benefit period for up to 52 weeks.
- Eliminate UI eligibility requirements that overly restrict access.
- Provide federal funding to cover the cost of these temporary changes.

Provide Free Testing, Treatment, and Prevention:

- Require private health insurers, Medicare Part B, Medicare Advantage, Medicaid, CHIP, TRICARE, and the Indian Health Service to fully cover coronavirus testing, treatment and prevention at no out-of-pocket cost.

- Guarantee additional resources to hospitals, community health centers, and clinics and protections for frontline workers, including workers in the healthcare sector and other industries.
- Use the National Disaster Medical System to cover uninsured people with Medicare for any recommended care for coronavirus, including workers recently laid off.
- Provide additional emergency appropriations to cover these costs and the state share of Medicaid during this crisis to alleviate the strain on state budgets.

Include Immigration and Criminal Justice Protections:

- Mitigate the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak in prisons, jails, and immigration detention facilities by consulting with public health and medical professionals to implement best practices to prevent and manage the spread of infection while maintaining access to counsel and visitation, and upholding constitutional rights.
- Identify people who can be released, particularly those most vulnerable to contracting COVID-19, through release on recognizance, reasonable bond, or other appropriate alternatives to detention.
- Protect the health of everyone by providing free testing and treatment to all immigrants, regardless of their immigration status.
- Suspend immigration court operations and excuse or relax immigration deadlines for the duration of the outbreak and at least three months after.
- Cease immigration arrests for people who pose no significant public safety risk to minimize the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak in immigration detention.

Expand Paid Leave Policies:

- Reinstate protections for frontline workers including medical staff and domestic workers.
- Provide full wage replacement for workers who are unable to work.
- Mandate that businesses with more than 500 employees follow the same policies for employees without federal subsidy.
- Remove the hardship exemption for businesses with fewer than 50 employees given that these costs will be fully refunded by the federal government.

Maintain Election Integrity:

- Provide for nationwide no-excuse absentee voting as long as at least one-quarter of states are under emergency, as proposed in the Resilient Elections During Quarantines and Natural Disasters Act of 2020 introduced last week by Reps. Blumenauer, Del Bene, and Raskin.
- Provide at least \$500 million to states to implement mail-in voting programs.
- Provide appropriate polling place adjustments to uphold public health and maintain access to in-person voting for those who do not have access to mail voting.

Ensure Parity for Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and Urban Indian Organizations:

- Ensure that all federal funding streams and resources created to address the COVID-19 outbreak include Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and Urban Indian Organizations by

explicitly listing Tribes as eligible for any funding that states and local governments are eligible for.

- Create a Tribal Relief Fund to ensure that Indian Country is adequately prepared to address COVID-19 and provide impacted businesses with emergency relief, as well as access to capital and loans they need to maintain solvency.
- Ensure parity so that tribal governments receive the same resources provided in legislation, such as the tax credits, expanded nutrition benefits, and access to the Strategic National Stockpile of Medical Supplies.

Utilize the Defense Production Act (DPA):

- Require the President to provide Congress with a plan for the use of DPA authorities, including targets and timelines for the production of supplies needed to address the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Provide appropriate additional funding for the Defense Production Act fund to ensure that the nation's needs are met.

Sincerely,



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