

LETTER TO SPEAKER PELOSI AND MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ON BEHALF OF LOCAL OFFICEHOLDERS

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Members of Congress:

As state and local elected and appointed officials, we understand the immense responsibility we have to help our communities navigate this terrible crisis. We write to request your help to keep businesses open, ensure every family can meet their basic needs, and protect the safety of our essential workers throughout this national emergency.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced most of our country to shut down. Restaurants, retailers, and entertainment venues have shuttered—many of them permanently. Entire states are sheltering in place. Because of these necessary steps, millions of Americans will be unable to survive without urgent government intervention.

The crisis represents an existential threat for countless people across the country. Millions of employees have been furloughed or laid off. Meanwhile, millions of essential workers are risking their lives and the lives of their loved ones by going to work without adequate protection. Small business owners whose livelihood depends on customers have had to lay off or furlough employees, while they struggle to pay the bills. The COVID-19 crisis will require collective sacrifice and shared pain unlike anything we have seen in recent memory. However, much of that harm is avoidable if the federal government acts quickly and effectively to protect businesses, workers, families, and our communities.

We ask you to support the following policies to ensure that businesses, workers, and their families are protected during this crisis:

PAYCHECK GUARANTEE

Mass unemployment is a policy choice, not an inevitable result of this crisis. Shelter-in-place orders do not have to destroy viable businesses and force millions of people into unemployment. The best way for the government to put non-essential businesses into hibernation so that they can restart when this crisis ends is with direct payroll assistance to small businesses and employers.

A paycheck guarantee would ensure people can continue to pay rent, buy food, maintain healthcare, and care for their families during the pandemic—all while simultaneously providing economic stability to our small businesses that are struggling with viability in the midst of this crisis. Rather than pushing people out of their jobs and into unemployment lines, we can maintain the employer-employee relationship and be ready to reopen as soon as public health allows. Our workers and businesses deserve our support and investment.

A federal paycheck guarantee not only has broad support in our own country, but it also has proven results in others. The United Kingdom, Netherlands, France, and Germany have all adopted paycheck guarantees in some form. And Germany's program is credited with helping the country recover more quickly from its last recession.

DIRECT CASH ASSISTANCE

Providing direct cash assistance will alleviate the economic fallout of COVID-19 and provide a solid foundation for all. This assistance will prevent homelessness, protect medically vulnerable people who are unable to safely work, and boost the economy. We recommend the implementation of a direct cash assistance program that includes the following provisions: (1) a \$2,000 monthly payment to every person starting as soon as possible and lasting until the end of this pandemic, and (2) the utilization of pre-loaded debit card to provide those payments in order to avoid the roadblocks that come with accessing the funds without a bank account. Every single person in the United States and its territories, including children and non-citizens, should get this monthly cash assistance.

This policy enjoys cross-ideological support as a basic tool for stabilizing people and families during what promises to be a prolonged economic catastrophe. It will help stabilize those most economically impacted by the pandemic and provide a foundation for socio-economic mobility.

ESSENTIAL WORKER PROTECTIONS

Essential workers are on the front lines, fighting to keep our country running in the midst of this pandemic. Every day, they put their own safety, as well as the safety of their loved ones, at risk to do this critical work. We must establish protections to ensure they can do their jobs safely, and we must acknowledge the extreme risk they are taking to allow the rest of us to shelter in place.

First, we must provide our essential workers with adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) at no cost to the employee. Additionally, employers must be proactive about addressing COVID-19-related needs, including promptly notifying employees of potential exposure and frequently sanitizing work spaces.

Second, we must provide essential workers with the ability to safely isolate or quarantine to protect themselves, coworkers, their families, and our broader community. The reality is that many essential workers cannot safely self-quarantine in their own homes. We must provide free housing to essential workers who need to self-quarantine.

Third, essential workers must be provided hazard pay. From healthcare workers to grocery store clerks to delivery workers, people are also being asked to work longer hours, under more hazardous conditions, with less support. These workers should be paid for the risks they are taking on to continue their work during the pandemic.

Fourth, we must provide essential workers with no-cost childcare and eldercare during this crisis. Many essential workers provide for family and loved ones, and in many cases, they are the sole providers and caretakers. As a result of the shelter-in-place orders, many have lost access to the child care and support services they regularly use. To meet this need, we must ensure that our essential workers have access to childcare and eldercare services and resources.

These are unprecedented times. We need unprecedented action. We are asking you to provide the bold support that this crisis demands with immediate legislation implementing these necessary policies. We hope to meet (virtually) with you soon.

Sincerely,

SIGNED

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