

Members of the 116th Congress
Washington, DC

July 20, 2020

Dear Members of Congress,

We are a group of faith leaders who have come together to urge you to take all necessary steps to make sure that the people of our country do not suffer more than they already have due to the personal impacts of COVID-19 and its rippling economic effects.

The widespread uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic and recession calls for a multi-faceted response that includes automatic, ongoing programs and policies including more direct cash payments to families; extended and enhanced unemployment benefits; substantial aid to state and local governments; stronger SNAP benefits; robust child care funding and more. These programs and policies will hasten the economy recovery far more effectively if they stay in place until economic conditions warrant their phaseout. A critical piece of these efforts must be Congress's passing of **recurring direct stimulus payments, lasting until the economy recovers**. People are suffering. As faith leaders, our goal is always to ease that suffering. In that vein, we believe direct cash payments are the right thing to do to help Americans keep their heads above water during these extremely difficult times. Fortunately, economists believe they also are critical for the recovery of the overall economy as well.

The crisis is unprecedented, and our current systems are not protecting people. For many of us, helping the most vulnerable with essentials like food and shelter is part of our ministry. And we have seen the [massive increases](#) in the numbers of people coming to us for help. Our experience is, of course, borne out by the national numbers. The unemployment rate is already [dwarfing](#) peak levels from the Great Recession. As of a few weeks ago [27 million](#) Americans had lost their health insurance along with their jobs. And in relation to the broader economy, GDP is expected to shrink by [11 percent](#) during the second quarter of this year. On July 1st, [32 percent](#) of Americans were unable to pay their housing bill. You must take decisive, compassionate action now before this crisis devastates American families further.

Regular, lasting direct stimulus payments are the right thing to do. Our faiths compel us to make sure that the most vulnerable in our society are protected, and we believe our common humanity should compel everyone -- including our government -- to do the same thing. With this crisis, the number of extremely vulnerable people is growing everyday. That is why we ask you to support lasting direct stimulus payments. We believe it would be a great moral failing for the United States to not take such action and instead to let our people suffer needlessly. Even as a stop-gap, these payments would be the right thing to do; you have the means to help people on a scale that is rarely seen, and we ask you to employ them.

Fortunately, economists from [across the political spectrum](#) agree that direct stimulus payments are also the way to broader economic recovery. [Early research](#) confirms what we see every day: the initial stimulus checks only helped people survive for a few weeks, as they

quickly spent the money on essentials. Because most of our nation's economic output is a result of [consumer spending](#), without putting money in the pockets of everyday people, the chances for economic recovery are slim. As a result, economists argue that concerns about deficits [should not be used to block](#) appropriately strong measures to halt the downturn now.

We do not know what the coming days, weeks, and months will bring. What we do know is that action is needed now, and every day that passes it is needed more. We implore you to put into place direct stimulus payments that will stay in effect for as long as this crisis does -- along with other measures that will help promote a robust, sustained, racially equitable recovery -- immediately.

Sincerely,

Pastor Jamal Bryant, New Birth Church (GA)

Rev. Alfonso Campbell, Zion Baptist Church (Washington, DC)

Jennifer E. Copeland, Ph.D., Executive Director, North Carolina Council of Churches (NC)

Rabbi Michael Farbman, Temple Emanuel of Greater New Haven (CT)

Rev. Jane Field, Executive Director, Maine Council of Churches (ME)

Pastor Margaret Elaine Flake, Greater Allen AME Cathedral of New York (NY)

Pastor Willie Dwayne Francois III, Mount Zion Baptist Church (NJ)

Rev. Dr. Lisa M. Goods, Chaplain, Christiana Care Health System (DE)

Bishop Samuel L. Green, Sr., Seventh Episcopal District, African Methodist Episcopal Church (SC)

Rev. Stephen Green, Chair, Faith for Black Lives

Dr. Melvin L. Grimes, Executive Director, Churches United of the Quad City Area (IA)

Pastor Frederick Douglass Haynes, III, Friendship West (TX)

Pastor Jeffrey Johnson II, Eastern Star Church (IN)

Rev. Scott Lipscomb, Priest-in-Charge, St. Augustine's Episcopal Church (Washington, DC)

Pastor Michael McBride, The Way Church Berkeley (CA)

Bishop W. Darin Moore, AME Zion Church, Mid-Atlantic Region

Teresa Hord Owens, General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Dr. Emil Peeler, Senior Pastor, Capitol Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church (Washington, DC)

Rev. Dr. Dominique A. Robinson, AME Zion Church (GA)

Rev. Kelvin Sauls, Faith Without Borders

Rabbi Hannah Spiro, Hill Havurah (Washington, DC)

Rev. Dr. Gina M. Stewart, Christ MB Church (TN)

Presiding Prelate Marvin Frank Thomas, Sr., Second Episcopal District-CME Church (OH, KY)

Bishop Rufus K. Turner, Victory In Praise Church, Stockton (CA)

Rev. Dr. Farrell Bruce Williams, Bates Memorial Baptist Church (KY)