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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0913

April 9, 2020

The Honorable Nancy D. Pelosi, Speaker  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Nita Lowey, Chair  
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Bobby Scott, Chair  
House Committee on Education and Labor

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Chair  
House Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Maxine Waters, Chair  
House Committee on Financial Services

The Honorable Nydia Velázquez, Chair  
House Committee on Small Business

The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chair  
House Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure

The Honorable Richard Neal, Chair  
House Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Hoyer, Chair Lowey, Chair Scott, Chair Pallone, Chair Waters,  
Chair Velázquez, Chair DeFazio, and Chair Neal:

Thank you for strong leadership during this pandemic. Through your efforts, the People's House has responded with the seriousness and boldness this crisis demands. As you work to craft forthcoming COVID-19 response packages, I respectfully ask that you consider including the following provisions.

- 1. Additional Stimulus Payments.** As the public health crisis continues to ravage our country and our economy, the American people will need more than the direct stimulus payment included in the CARES Act. Congress should include a repeat payment for the months of May and June. Additionally, Congress should fix the drafting error in CARES Act to include dependent children, college students and adults with disabilities. Finally, the provision should include automatic stabilizers to authorize additional payments if the country is still confronting the public health or economic emergency.
- 2. Support State Unemployment Infrastructure.** State unemployment systems were not built to withstand the crush of how many unemployed Americans are in need. They lack personnel, resources, infrastructure, and, in some cases, technological savvy to best serve people who are out-of-work and desperate. Congress should allocate additional administrative funding to support state efforts to process, distribute, monitor, and audit unemployment claims during the emergency and recovery. Congress should direct GSA to deploy and empower the United States Digital Services team, in partnership with

leaders in the tech community, to create a mobile app that states can use to efficiently receive and automatically process applications for unemployment assistance.

3. **Expand Small Business Assistance.** Frustrations around the rollout of the Small Business provisions of the CARES Act undergird the desperate need in our communities. The CARES Act should be considered a down payment. The new bill should be more open-ended, providing additional relief where needed and extend the period of loan forgiveness. This will keep more small businesses afloat for longer and – critically – more Americans receiving their paychecks. The expanded assistance should include automatic stabilizers to restart the program if America faces a second wave of COVID-19 or if recovery from our dire economic downturn takes longer than forecast. Finally, Congress should expand eligibility to include non-profits like museums, libraries, and civic organizations that have more than 500 employees, as well as exclude student work-study recipients from the number of employees.
4. **Support Frontline Healthcare Workers.** If our nation's battle against coronavirus is truly a war, our frontline healthcare workers deserve to be compensated as such. All income earned on the front lines during the public health emergency should be excluded from federal income taxes. Additionally, the bill should include a \$100,000 death benefit for the families of healthcare workers killed by COVID-19 in the line of duty. This not only respects their sacrifice and the danger they face every day to save lives, it offers an additional layer of protection against life insurance policies that exclude pandemics.
5. **Support Essential Workers.** Essential workers, like those working in sanitation, transportation, grocery stores, pharmacies, warehouse, package and mail delivery, and cleaning crews are putting themselves at risk so more Americans can stay home. Congress should mandate that employers of essential workers provide personal protective equipment, guarantee sick leave regardless of business size including leave taken waiting for COVID-19 test results, a hazard pay rate of at least \$15 per hour, and improved workplace safety standards like access to soap, water, and sanitizers with daily sanitization of workplaces. The employers seeing an economic boom from the crisis should share that success with their workforce.
6. **Add Borrower Protections to Forbearance Relief.** Critical forbearance borrower protections included in the initial Senate bill were left out of the final package. As a result, some borrowers seeking relief are being told that they will owe a balloon payment upon exiting forbearance. This is unacceptable and will lead to a wave of defaults if this is not fixed. Borrowers should be able to choose whether to extend their maturity rate or slightly increase monthly payments over the life of the loan. Servicers should give borrowers the option of rolling advance escrow payments into the entire loan balance. Congress should authorize a liquidity facility within the Federal Reserve to ensure continued functionality of the housing finance market.
7. **Healthcare for Unemployed and Uninsured Workers.** With millions of Americans out of work and millions more uninsured before the crisis, Congress should mandate a nationwide Special Enrollment Period. This would reduce out of pocket costs for the

people and help shore up healthcare providers that are teetering due to the pandemic response. Congress should expand and improve the Advance Premium Tax Credit so more people can afford better health plans, and prime, working age Americans won't be afraid to leave their homes and return to the economy. At the very least, Congress should provide a 100% subsidy for COBRA premiums during the emergency.

8. **Airline Refunds.** Although airlines have been bailed out by taxpayers, their customers are only being awarded time-constrained credits for cancelled or missed flights. Airlines receiving bailout funds should offer full cash refunds for travelers missing or cancelling reservations due to COVID-19. If airlines get a hand up due to the unforeseen pandemic, their customers should as well.
9. **Extend Student Loan Relief.** Under the CARES Act, students receive a 6-month deferment on repayment of federal student loans. This is a critical step. As the United States slowly begins to recover, recent graduates will face a challenging and extremely uncertain job market. The deferment should be extended to 6 months after the end of the national emergency.
10. **Expand and Improve Nutrition Assistance.** As panic buying occurs, it is becoming increasingly difficult for SNAP and WIC recipients to find affordable, healthy food options. The next coronavirus relief package should provide additional federal dollars to SNAP and WIC recipients on top of their state benefits, as well as expand items eligible for purchase using nutrition assistance programs. For example, SNAP recipients should be allowed to purchase prepared food and household disinfectants using their benefits, and more flexibility must be provided to WIC-approved foods. Additionally, SNAP and WIC benefits should be made eligible for online grocery shopping so high-risk recipients do not need to leave their homes during the pandemic. Finally, Congress should waive prohibitions on nutrition assistance for non-violent returning citizens. As the Department of Justice and states release prisoners to reduce overcrowding and COVID-19 risk, returning citizens face an economy in a medically induced coma. Temporarily providing basic assistance will reduce recidivism and make our communities safer.
11. **Direct Funding for Mid-Sized Localities:** The CARES Act created a \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund that provides direct payments to state and tribal governments, as well as large localities with populations over 500,000. This population threshold prevents countless mid-sized communities from receiving direct relief payments, despite facing enormous costs in responding to the coronavirus pandemic. The next relief package should include an additional \$150 billion allocation and lower the population threshold to 50,000 to match the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. This will allow more localities to directly access stabilization funds.
12. **Support the Free Press.** Local media outlets are facing financial hardship in the wake of COVID-19. In this time of crisis, we need quality journalism and accurate information now more than ever. All print media outlets, regardless of size or ownership structure, should have access to the Paycheck Protection Program and other small business assistance. This will keep journalists on payroll doing crucial reporting at a time when

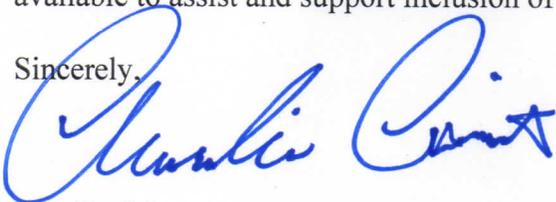
disinformation and misinformation threaten Americans' freedom and safety. Additionally, Congress should provide and direct COVID-19 health and government relief advertising funding to be spent specifically in print media, often the main source of information for at-risk Americans.

13. **Election Assistance.** As our country is gearing up for the 2020 elections, states must use every tool in their toolbox to make sure that every voter can safely and confidently cast their ballot. With many states enacting stay-at-home orders and with social distancing as our current most effective tool to fight coronavirus, asking folks to show up to the polls in person on the same day is dangerous and will suppress turnout. Congress should appropriate an additional \$4 billion in Election Assistance Grants to provide states with the resources to expand early voting days and implement statewide vote-by-mail program. States accepting this assistance should have to abide by Voting Rights Act requirements and abandon common voter disenfranchisement practices like purging voter rolls and signature check.
14. **Infrastructure.** Given the extreme damage the COVID-19 pandemic has done to our economy, the best way to get our country back on track is with a significant, comprehensive plan to rebuild our nation's crumbling infrastructure. This will put Americans back to work and make us more resilient for future crises. With historically low interest rates and a severe drop in economic output, Congress should think big on infrastructure. Along with that, I ask that any infrastructure package include the following:
  - a. Support all modes of transportation, including upgrading cities to a 21<sup>st</sup> century transit system and supporting maritime ports and intermodal hubs;
  - b. Modernizing and securing the electric grid;
  - c. Expanding broadband access to low-income families and rural areas;
  - d. Shovel-ready mitigation projects - such as the creation of a State Revolving Loan Fund for flood mitigation (H.R.1610) - boosting mitigation options as we move into the Atlantic hurricane season;
  - e. Our space program has the potential to provide hope and inspiration - and jobs - during these trying times. Funding for NASA should be included in a coronavirus relief package to support cutting-edge aerospace jobs and maintain the timeline of NASA's Artemis program; and
  - f. Develop pandemic research infrastructure at universities and research centers around the country.
15. **Hurricane Preparedness.** Hurricane season officially begins on June 1, but Floridians know to prepare long before a disaster occurs. With FEMA's resources already stretched thin and with researchers predicting an "above average" hurricane season, it is vital that FEMA and other relevant agencies have the resources and personnel they need to respond to potential natural disasters during the pandemic. Congress should direct FEMA to report its hurricane preparedness plan during the pandemic by May 31. Congress should provide commensurate administrative and programmatic funding to support that plan.

16. **Alternatives to Hospitals for Non-COVID, Non-Emergency Seniors.** Congress should affirm CMS' emergency authority to temporarily modify reimbursement and coverage so non-COVID, non-emergency seniors only go to hospitals as a last resort. Some statutory and regulatory Medicare provisions like those governing remote monitoring, cancer treatment, and post-acute care waiting periods encourage seniors to go to hospitals when other options are available. During the emergency, hospitals should be the last resort for everything but emergencies and severe COVID-19 cases.
17. **Telehealth for Opioid Addiction Treatment and Recovery.** The CARES Act supported Medication-Assisted Treatment for opioid addiction by allowing "take-home" doses. Congress should double-down on its support for individuals in recovery by allowing clinics to use telehealth for prescription consultations and follow-ups for MAT patients. This will reduce the risk of relapse and the risk of contracting coronavirus for individuals in recovery – many of whom are immunosuppressed due to past drug use.
18. **Clean Energy.** Clean energy industries are getting hit hard by COVID-19 delays and cancellations. At the same time, clean energy tax credits provide immediate stimulus for our economy by supporting shovel-ready projects that can put people to work, move us forward on climate, and expand resilient power generation. If the package is going to include Strategic Petroleum Reserve support for domestic oil and gas unrelated to the coronavirus pandemic, it must include support for renewable energy as well.
19. **Public Health Personnel.** With America's public health system stretched to its limits, Congress should invest now in expanding personnel capabilities. Our nation cannot emerge from its medically induced economic coma until departments of health, HHS, and FEMA dramatically increase staff for increased coronavirus surveillance, contact tracing, vaccine administration, and emergency support for the frontline healthcare workforce. To give America a shot at beginning to return to normal, Congress should provide direct support for significantly increasing temporary public health staff as soon as possible.

Thank you again for your leadership and consideration of these suggestions. I believe they will enrich and supplement your existing, outstanding efforts. Both me and my staff remain available to assist and support inclusion of these priorities.

Sincerely,



Charlie Crist  
UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN