



December 19, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Clyburn  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Obey  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Oberstar  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barney Frank  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Dingell  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rubén Hinojosa  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, Majority Whip Clyburn, Chairman Miller, Chairman Obey, Chairman Frank, Chairman Oberstar, Chairman Dingell, and Chairman Hinojosa:

Thank you for your continuing efforts to develop a recovery package to jumpstart the economy and get workers back on the job. As you prepare to pass an economic recovery bill that will create hundreds of thousands of badly needed new jobs through federal spending to modernize our infrastructure and green our economy, we urge you to ensure that all Americans are able to benefit from this investment, and that those who have been struggling even before the downturn are not left even further behind.

During the 2000 to 2007 business cycle, according to an Economic Policy Institute analysis, the bottom 60 percent of families saw their real incomes decline – only the top 40 percent saw any gains. More than one in four workers earned “poverty-level” wages in 2007. While the national unemployment rate was 6.7 percent in November 2008, it was considerably higher for some groups of workers. For Hispanics unemployment reached 8.6 percent, for African-Americans it was 11.2 percent, and for adults 25 or older without a high school degree it was 10.5 percent. In addition, over 650,000 individuals are released from federal and state prison each year, and they will need employment opportunities as they re-enter the workforce. Even before the recession hit, there were nearly 4 million 18- to 24-year-olds both out of school and out of work.



In order to ensure that these groups have access to the new job opportunities being created as part of economic recovery, we urge that you couple investments to spur job creation with investments in job training and job access. We recommend that Congress require that in the first year, at least 15 percent of work hours on job creation projects funded through the recovery package be performed by low-income individuals and other target populations such as veterans and disconnected youth. We recommend that Congress require that the percentage of work hours performed by target populations increase to at least 20 percent in the second year.

We also recommend that Congress dedicate an amount equal to at least 1 percent of federal funds spent on job creation for skills development and job placement directly tied to the jobs being created through economic recovery. States should have flexibility to identify and fund creative and effective workforce development programs and partnerships, including those run by nonprofit organizations, labor organizations, employers, local workforce investment boards, community colleges, and other state and local entities. Funding should also be provided for the supportive services, including child care, needed to allow all workers to participate in job training.

There is a broad consensus that the projects funded under the economic recovery package should be designed to build the economic infrastructure for the 21<sup>st</sup> century – reliable transportation, including rails as well as roads, high speed internet, renewable and non-polluting energy, modern and energy-efficient schools, and child care centers. The human capital built through these investments is also critical to building a workforce for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, so that when we finally come out of this recession, everyone is able to contribute to our country's success, and benefit from its revitalized growth. This historical investment will make America a more prosperous nation; it should also help our country make progress towards goals of reducing poverty and inequality and promoting opportunity for all.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to these goals. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these proposals in more detail.

Sincerely,

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Center for Community Change (CCC)