



# COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

## *The Human Needs Report*

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### **Advocates Continue to Push for Next COVID-19 Congressional Response Package**

With the number of coronavirus cases – and struggling Americans – increasing across the country, advocates continue to push the Senate to act on another federal response package. Congress has already enacted [four bills](#) to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and resulting fallout, but advocates are united in saying more must be done to address both the country's economic recovery and provide immediate and longer-term support to those whose needs were left out or not adequately addressed in the previous packages. To this end, House has passed a fifth bill that is pending in the Senate.

The latest response bill, the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, was [passed](#) by the House on May 15; one Republican joined most Democrats in supporting the legislation, while 14 Democrats and one Independent joined most Republicans in opposing it. Advocates celebrated many provisions of the \$3.5 trillion bill (H.R. 6800), which included nearly \$1 trillion in aid to

state and local governments to help address budget shortfalls, \$100 billion in rental assistance for low-income households, and \$24 billion for SNAP/food stamps and other nutrition programs through FY 2025. The bill would also fund another round of direct payments to individuals, including many immigrants left out of the CARES Act; expand sick days and medical leave for workers; provide \$3.6 billion to states to help support safe elections and increased access to voting by mail; and extend unemployment insurance, among other things. CHN said in a [statement](#) about the bill, “The HEROES Act takes needed steps to help families afford food and rent. It recognizes that states and localities will not be able to provide essential services without plugging the yawning gap in revenues caused by the pandemic shutdown. It addresses what Americans are going through now by improving and extending unemployment benefits, paid leave, and cash aid....[T]he legislation needs to move forward.” For more specifics on the HEROES Act, see [these materials](#) from the House Appropriations Committee.

However, the bill has stalled in the Senate, where Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has vowed to let it die. Instead, he has said Republicans will assess economic conditions in July before deciding if they will draft and take up legislation after the chamber’s July 4 recess. He has previously urged protection for businesses from lawsuits related to COVID-19 as a top priority for any new package, which Democrats oppose. Reports are that Republicans are split on another round of stimulus payments to individuals, with some in favor of rebates for everyone and some, like White House National Economic Council Director Larry Kudlow, [saying](#) rebate checks could be limited to those who have lost work; others are opposed to an additional round of direct aid altogether.

The Trump Administration has voiced a willingness to consider more aid to individuals, but President Trump [has also repeatedly demanded](#) that any new package include a payroll tax cut, which Democrats and economists have opposed as ineffectual stimulus that would undermine the stability of Social Security funding if its reduced revenues were not replaced from the general fund.

The severity of current economic conditions and the surging number of COVID-19 cases around the country have pushed both Majority Leader McConnell and the Trump Administration to express more openness to another relief bill: McConnell has talked about a \$1 trillion package; members of the Trump Administration have mentioned \$2 trillion. But the Senate will leave for its July 4 recess without having acted, and will not return until July 20. That leaves very few days before the \$600 per week Pandemic Unemployment Compensation payments and the eviction moratorium expire.

Meanwhile, House committees continue to hold hearings on the importance of an increased federal response. On June 23, the House Budget Committee held a [hearing](#) on “Health and Wealth Inequality in America: How COVID-19 Makes Clear the Need for Change,” while the Worker and Family Support Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee held a [hearing](#) on “The Child Care Crisis and the Coronavirus Pandemic.” Other House committee hearings last week related to COVID-19 focused on the Trump Administration’s response to the pandemic, access to telehealth for veterans, and more.

And in an effort to urge the Senate to act on the HEROES Act – or at least parts of it – House Democrats have been introducing bills that would address important provisions they want enacted soon. For example, the full House could vote as early as this week on the Emergency Housing Protections and

Relief Act (H.R. 7301). This bill contains the housing and homelessness resources passed in the HEROES Act, including \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance, a national moratorium on evictions and foreclosures, and more. See the [National Low Income Housing Coalition site](#) for more information on the housing provisions in bill and the HEROES Act.

House Democrats also introduced a bill last week “to expand the availability of quality child care, help workers return to their jobs when it is safe, and enable America’s economy to recover from the COVID-19 recession.” The [Child Care for Economic Recovery Act](#) would provide a tax credit of up to \$3,000 for one child and up to \$6,000 for two or more children for low- and middle-income families , as well as create a tax credit for child care providers and offer \$10 billion to improve child care facilities and infrastructure. In addition, [two bills](#) introduced last week would provide partial fixes for spouses of immigrants who were denied federal relief in the CARES Act.

For more information on the contents of all of the previous COVID-19 Congressional response packages, as well as information on what advocates are pushing for in the next package, see the [May 4 Human Needs Report](#). For more on what CHN believes should be in the next package, click [here](#) and [here](#). For many more resources, including statements from many of CHN’s members on the legislation that has passed and on their priorities for additional action, see CHN’s COVID-19 resource page [here](#).

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## **FY21 Spending Bills Set to Move in the House, but Are Stalled in the Senate**

The House is gearing up for several weeks of quick action on Fiscal Year 2021 spending bills, expected to start next week. According to a schedule released by House Appropriations Chair Nita Lowey (D-NY), House Appropriations Subcommittees will take up the spending bills in their jurisdiction starting July 6, with the full committee starting to take up the bills on July 9. Also on the 9<sup>th</sup>, the committee will approve the topline spending limit for each of the 12 required spending bills, known as 302(b) allocations; these allocations have not yet been made public. The stated goal is to have five spending bills passed by the full House Appropriations Committee by July 10 and the other seven bills passed by the committee by July 16. The full House could then take up and vote on the bills the last two weeks of July, with the goal being to pass all 12 before lawmakers begin the August recess.

Reports are that the House spending bills will include provisions dealing with issues such as additional funding for the federal COVID-19 response and policies that address policing reform, though it’s not yet known how these provisions will differ from provisions in the HEROES Act or the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act passed by the House (for more on the policing bill, see the related article in this *Human Needs Report*). The House spending bills are expected to pass largely along party lines.

Appropriations work in the Senate, however, has come to a standstill before things even really got going. Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Richard Shelby (R-AL) and the committee’s top-ranking Democrat, Sen. Patrick Leahy (VT), failed to reach an agreement about the types of amendments that

could be offered to the spending bills, putting an indefinite pause on spending work in the upper chamber. Similar to action in the House, Senate Democrats want to be able to offer amendments that would provide additional money for COVID-19 responses, as well as policies that address policing reform and other social justice issues; Sen. Shelby does not want to allow these types of amendments. It is highly unlikely that the Senate will take up the bills the House passes, either.

In addition to the amendment impasse in the Senate, another challenge for this year is the limited funding due to topline spending caps enacted as part of the bipartisan budget deal Congress passed last July. In total, Congress will have \$10 billion more in FY21 base discretionary dollars to work with than it did in FY20; \$5 billion more for defense and \$5 billion more for nondefense programs. This total does not include some funding, like some emergency disaster aid and war funding, that Congress approves outside of the caps.

Even before the coronavirus pandemic hit, advocates were concerned that the \$5 billion increase for nondefense programs will be entirely consumed by rising costs in veterans' health care, leading to flat funding or even cuts in other human needs programs. With the need for continued increased funding to respond to the pandemic and resulting economic recession, advocates are seeking to move some of the veterans' health care services outside the cap, and to add emergency titles to all 12 appropriations bills, which would allow for additional spending outside of the caps. If Congress cannot find more flexibility in domestic funding, it is likely that many programs will suffer severe cuts and many services will further erode.

In April, nearly 400 groups, including the Coalition on Human Needs, [urged](#) leading appropriators in Congress to allocate a greater share of funds in fiscal year 2021 to programs controlled by the departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. These programs largely have been [shortchanged in the appropriations process over the last decade](#).

Most believe that an impasse on spending bills will lead to Congress being forced to pass a stop-gap spending bill, known as a Continuing Resolution or CR, to keep the government running once the new fiscal year begins on October 1. A CR would fund government programs at FY20 levels; Congress can include 'anomalies,' or adjustments to funding levels, for select programs if they can agree upon them. Many believe a CR will last until after the November elections; the outcome of the elections may determine whether FY21 spending bills are passed in the lame duck session in December or a CR is extended into January.

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### **House Infrastructure Package Contains Money for Housing, Schools, Broadband, and More**

House Democrats unveiled a \$1.5 trillion infrastructure bill on June 18, and the full House could take up the bill as early as this week. Advocates have two main interests in any infrastructure package: whether it has human needs-related components, such as money for low-income housing or to rebuild schools or

child care centers, for example, and whether it will be effective in creating jobs targeted to low-income people and communities, with special attention paid to communities of color.

According to materials from the [House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Democrats](#), the Moving Forward Act (H.R. 2) will invest \$130 billion to improve and rebuild facilities in high-poverty schools; includes \$10 billion to improve child care facilities; promotes revitalization in economically distressed communities; and promotes further development in and parity for tribal communities. In addition, the bill would invest \$100 billion to promote competition for broadband internet infrastructure to unserved and underserved rural, suburban, and urban communities, prioritizing communities in persistent poverty. On the health front, the bill would invest \$25 billion to ensure all communities have clean drinking water, and would invest \$30 billion to upgrade hospitals to increase capacity and strengthen care, help community health centers respond to COVID-19 and future public health emergencies, improve clinical laboratory infrastructure, support the Indian Health Service's infrastructure, and increase capacity for community-based care. \$25 billion is also included in the bill for the U.S. Postal Service infrastructure and operations.

According to the [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#), the bill proposes \$100 billion to construct and preserve 1.8 million affordable homes, including \$70 billion for public housing capital repairs and \$5 billion for the national Housing Trust Fund. In addition to the money for affordable housing, the bill would expand the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit by creating targeted housing incentives to build homes in rural and tribal communities and for people at risk of homelessness. The bill would also establish a Neighborhood Investment Tax Credit to subsidize certain development costs for the construction of new homes or rehabilitation of vacant homes. According to *CQ*, the bill also contains \$3.3 billion for energy efficiency projects for low-income housing and \$1 billion for solar projects in underserved areas. *CQ* also reports that the White House may be working on its own \$1 trillion infrastructure package.

While statements about HR 2 suggest it will create millions of jobs, no details are provided on that front.

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### **House Passes Sweeping Criminal Justice Reform Bill, But the Path to Enactment is Murky**

Both the House and Senate took up policing reform bills last week, with very different results. The House passed a sweeping criminal justice reform bill, while a narrower bill in the Senate was blocked by Democrats who felt it didn't go far enough.

The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act (H.R. 7120) was approved by the House on June 25; [three](#) Republicans joined all Democrats in supporting the measure. According to materials from the [House Judiciary Committee](#), the bill would ban chokeholds by federal officers and places limits on their use by state and local officers, establish a national database to track police misconduct, and make it easier to hold officers accountable for misconduct in civil and criminal court, eliminating "qualified immunity"

that shields police officers from lawsuits (but, disappointing advocates, the legislation for the first time writes qualified immunity into statute for other public employees). The bill also bans no knock warrants in drug cases and bans racial profiling. The bill is not expected to be taken up in the Senate, and the White House has [said](#) President Trump would veto the bill if it reached his desk.

Vanita Gupta, president and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights (LCCHR), said in a [statement](#), “We applaud the House for taking critical action toward meaningful accountability in policing that will help curb state sanctioned violence by law enforcement. The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and all of the Black and Brown people killed by police demand structural change to shift police culture and practices. The Senate must now take up this legislation, work to strengthen it, and pass the bill.”

LCCHR led a group of nearly 140 organizations, including CHN, in urging senators to oppose a procedural move to move forward with the Senate bill (S. 3985) because the bill did not do enough to reform current policies. The groups [said](#) the Just and Unifying Solutions to Invigorate Communities Everywhere (JUSTICE) Act (S. 3985) “falls woefully short of the comprehensive reform needed to address the current policing crisis and achieve meaningful law enforcement accountability. It is deeply problematic to meet this moment with a menial incremental approach that offers more funding to police, and few policies to effectively address the constant loss of Black lives at the hands of police.” [Politico](#) reported that the bill would require disclosures about the use of force and provide incentives for chokehold bans; it would not limit qualified immunity for police officers. Fifty-five senators voted to move forward with the bill, but 60 votes were needed to proceed.

On June 16, President Trump issued an [Executive Order](#) on policing that called for police departments to ban chokeholds except when an officer feels his or her life is endangered. It also creates a national database to track officers with multiple instances of misconduct. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) [said](#) the order “falls sadly and seriously short” of what is needed. The House Judiciary Committee put out a [comparison piece](#) showing the similarities and differences between the House bill, the Senate bill, and the President’s Executive Order.

With partisan differences on the ideas offered in the House and Senate policing reform bills, the path to get a bill passed into law is unclear.

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### **Advocates Welcome Supreme Court Decisions Protecting LGBTQ people, Dreamers**

Human needs advocates were pleasantly surprised earlier this month when the Supreme Court handed down two eagerly anticipated rulings, one affirming that LGBTQ people in the workplace are protected from discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the other stating that the Trump Administration, at least for now, cannot deport Dreamers.

“For the first time, this historic decision ensures that LGBTQ people have nationwide employment protection and represents a monumental step that will help to create a safer working environment for everyone,” Imani Rupert-Gordon, Executive Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said in a [statement](#). “During a global health crisis and a growing nationwide movement to focus on supporting and protecting Black lives – particularly Black transgender lives – against systematic racism and violence, this historic ruling is both uplifting and encouraging. However, we know that our work is far from complete, and the fight for full LGBTQ equality continues.”

CHN Executive Director Deborah Weinstein joined NCLR and others in applauding the Court’s 6-3 ruling, which was written by Justice Neil Gorsuch and joined by Chief Justice John Roberts as well as the Court’s four more progressive Justices. “At a time when millions of Americans are marching in support of Black lives and to dismantle systemic racism, the Supreme Court took an important step toward reversing another form of discrimination,” Weinstein [said](#). “But our work is not done. Discrimination against LGBTQ people still exists – and is legally permissible – in many areas, including access to stores, restaurants, and hotels; in federally funded programs such as hospitals, colleges, and adoption agencies; and in so many other areas. And it is a cruel irony that in the middle of the current COVID-19 crisis, LGBTQ people can still be denied access to the care they need. Our country’s march toward ending systemic discrimination continues on many fronts.”

And in a 5-4 decision written by Roberts and joined by the Court’s four more progressive members, the majority of Justices opined that the Trump Administration violated the Administrative Procedures Act in its effort to deport Dreamers. The Court called the Administration’s actions “capricious and arbitrary.”

The decision, for now at least, will allow the 700,000 Dreamers who benefit from DACA to remain in the country. More than 200,000 Dreamers work in industries deemed essential during the current pandemic; that includes 27,000 Dreamers who work on the front lines as medical professionals.

“Today the Supreme Court sided with the vast majority of Americans by protecting DACA recipients from President Trump’s inhumane mission to deport as many people as possible,” [said](#) UnidosUS President and CEO Janet Murguía. “This decision is a victory for Dreamers – and for the entire country. Dreamers are already home, building families, creating communities and helping lift up everyone in America. Today’s decision validates the need for Congress to act and deliver the lasting decision Dreamers and the millions of American families they are members of deserve. And today we celebrate the commitment and fight of young advocates across the country who have fought so hard to make today possible.”

CHN’s Weinstein also welcomed the decision. “The vast majority of Americans believe, based on their knowledge of how DACA participants came to this country and their contributions to our nation, that decency, justice and humanity require us to recognize and affirm that DACA participants are valued members of our communities and deserve permanent legal status and a path to citizenship,” Weinstein [said](#). “We celebrate the Supreme Court’s ruling, but know that the real celebration of justice and human decency awaits Congress’ enactment of legislation to provide legal status and a path to citizenship for

700,000 DACA recipients and other immigrants who every day make essential contributions to our communities.”

Not all news out of the Supreme Court recently has been good, however. On June 25, the court ruled 7-2 that asylum-seekers have no right to a federal court hearing before being removed from the U.S. In a blog piece, the American Immigration Council [said](#) the Supreme Court’s decision on this fast-track deportation process, known as expedited removal, “leaves already vulnerable asylum seekers, suffering from trauma and often without access to attorneys, at even greater risk of abuse in a fast-track deportation system riddled with error.”

The Trump Administration last week also filed a brief with the Supreme Court urging it to strike down the Affordable Care Act. Doing so would threaten the coverage of the 23 million Americans – nearly 3 million of them children – who gained coverage under the Affordable Care Act, and the stakes are even higher now given the current pandemic and the fact that millions of Americans have recently lost health insurance when they lost their jobs. According to [The Hill](#), the case will likely not be decided before the November elections.

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**We appreciate your input.** Give us your thoughts on our *Human Needs Report* at [limbery@chn.org](mailto:limbery@chn.org).

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