



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

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December 3, 2020

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the [Coalition on Human Needs](#), I am writing with an urgent request: the lives and livelihoods of millions of Americans depend on you agreeing now at least to a down payment on the coronavirus relief that is needed. This cannot wait. The eviction moratorium and pandemic unemployment insurance expire by the end of December. COVID-19 cases are surging, with more than 200,000 cases reported on December 2 and hospitals dangerously overstretched.

We want to express gratitude to the bipartisan group of Senators who have negotiated a package of relief measures, and much gratitude as well to Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader Schumer for their willingness to use that package as the basis for negotiating a COVID package to respond to our urgent needs. We are counting on you to do all in your power to support further improvements so that a package can be enacted before the work of this Congress concludes.

Here is why this is so urgent: nearly [half of all adults](#) report someone in their household has lost income from work since March, and 16 million jobless workers have either already lost their pandemic unemployment benefits or will see them cut off on December 26. (Another [million unemployment claims](#), including pandemic assistance, were filed last week.) More than one-third – 85 million adults – say it has been somewhat or very [difficult to pay their usual household expenses](#). More than 12 million renters are behind in their rent, and they will lose the protection of the eviction moratorium by December's end. Four in ten children of renters are in households that either have not had enough to eat in the previous week or are behind in rent. Failure to act now will compound the shamefully disparate impact on people of color; well over half of Latino and Black adults are in households that have lost earnings (60.6 percent and 55.4 percent, respectively). You must not abandon these millions of Americans.

A barebones relief package must reinstate Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (the additional aid that was \$600/week until it expired in July). We strongly hope that the final negotiated relief package will include an amount higher than the \$300/week included in the bipartisan Emergency Relief Framework. The package must also include extension of the expiring Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, which provides help to gig and self-employed workers who are ineligible for state aid, and continue extended benefits to assist the surging numbers of long-term unemployed.

A barebones package must include extending and improving the national moratorium on evictions and must include emergency rental assistance. Not all tenants have benefited from the current CDC moratorium, because they did not learn they needed to fill out a form to qualify; improvements would either make the moratorium universal or require notice to tenants. New [research](#) on earlier state eviction moratoria showed that after 27 states lifted their moratoria, there were 434,000 excess cases of COVID-19 and 10,700 excess deaths, compared to the expected results if all states had continued the ban on evictions. Extending the moratorium is not enough: it is clear that renters with low incomes

cannot pay their back rent without help. Nor can they pay back utility arrearages; we hope a relief package will offer aid so people do not face heat, water, or electricity shutoffs.

A barebones relief package must include a lookback provision for the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, providing families with the option to use either their 2019 or 2020 earnings to calculate their 2020 tax credits. This will target assistance to families with low/moderate incomes whose earnings declined due to the pandemic. For example, a single mother with two children whose earnings dropped from \$15,000 in 2019 to \$5,000 in 2020 would lose \$5,410 in the combined tax credits on top of the painful loss of earnings. The lookback provision, similar to actions Congress has taken to help in other disaster relief, would allow families to use their pre-pandemic earnings to avoid the precipitous loss of the low-income tax credits. We understand from tax experts that this provision cannot be applied retroactively, so you must include it now. It has bipartisan support in both the House and Senate.

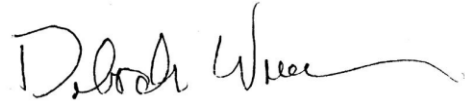
A barebones relief package must also include fiscal relief for states, localities, territories, and tribes. Such aid must provide education aid as well as help to prevent loss of public health, safety, and other government services at all levels. States are continuing to draw down previously approved funds; Congress cannot assume that continued access to those funds is enough to alleviate substantial shortfalls.

A barebones package must include nutrition help to stave off direct and immediate hunger. Twenty-six million adults reported in mid-November that their households sometimes or often did not have enough to eat in the prior week. Around one in five Black and Latinx households lacked enough food. Hunger and food insecurity in Puerto Rico and the territories are at an all-time high; they urgently need supplemental nutrition aid to relieve the financial constraints created by their capped block grant funding. Our people's health is being compromised. For some, the consequences will be long-term; lives will be lost. Please insist on increased SNAP and child nutrition benefits in this package.

The bipartisan COVID Emergency Relief Framework includes other important provisions, including COVID medical care, testing, and vaccine development and distribution, as well as increased funding for child care, opioid treatment, student loan relief, small business aid, broadband, and the U.S. Postal Service. Please work to increase the amount for child care; many child care providers are in danger of shutting down. Emergency family and medical leave and paid sick leave previously enacted will expire on December 31 – please extend it, to respond to the pandemic's growing toll on work and health. We also strongly urge the inclusion of extended deadlines for the Census Bureau's transmission of 2020 Census data for purposes of apportionment and later re-districting, allowing time for the Census Bureau to correct errors they have identified and improve the accuracy of the count. Our democracy and distributing funds where they are most needed depend on an accurate census. We oppose inclusion of immunity from COVID-related liability claims, especially in the absence of protections for workers, patients, and others **required** of businesses and other institutions.

This package will not be all that is needed. But it will prevent the added devastation of expiring unemployment benefits, lost eviction and student debt protections, and continued loss of earnings from overtaking millions of families at year's end. It will enable medical treatment and vaccine distribution we so urgently need. Congressional inaction in the face of this would harshly worsen our national emergency. We are counting on you to prevent that by working to improve and voting for COVID emergency relief.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Weinstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Deborah Weinstein
Executive Director