

February 4, 2021

Dear Representative/Senator:

The undersigned national organizations are writing to urge you to take quick action to enact no less than President Biden's American Rescue Plan. At the current pace, the nation will exceed 500,000 deaths from the coronavirus in the third week of February. We are in a race to vaccinate millions of people before variants of the disease can evade the vaccines now developed. We have passed 45 consecutive weeks of new unemployment claims higher than the worst week of the Great Recession. Millions of Americans are going hungry. More than one-third of people reported they had serious difficulty paying regular household bills in the previous week. If you do not act in a way that is commensurate with the hardships now being experienced, families that could have managed will be pushed into poverty and deaths that could have been avoided will occur.

Congress must prioritize the well-being of communities of color in the next COVID package to reduce shameful inequities laid bare by the pandemic. Black, Brown, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous people are far more likely to [fall ill](#) or [die](#) of COVID-19 than Whites. More than half of Latinx and Black respondents in [mid-January](#) found it somewhat or very difficult to afford basic household expenses (almost twice the rate of White households). One-quarter of Latinx and one-third of Black households were behind in their rent, 2-3 times the rate of Whites. By targeting resources where the need is greatest, the American Rescue plan will reduce disparities. Its income, housing, health care, worker protections, nutrition supports, paid leave, and other provisions of the American Rescue Plan cited here will ease the disproportionate harm experienced by communities of color.

We know that in the aftermath of the Great Recession, failure to shore up the economy adequately slowed the recovery. We must not make that mistake again, especially during a downturn that is deeper than anything we have experienced since the Great Depression. The American Rescue Plan will speed vaccinations to allow the economy to reopen safely, provide assistance to states and localities so they can provide health, education, public safety and other essential services, and [cut child poverty in half](#). The Plan will protect people from eviction and make it possible for many to pay back rent and utility bills. It will help to rebuild the child care sector so parents can return to work, and provides for paid leave to enable them to stay home when that is what health and safety requires. The aid to small businesses is well-targeted to help the hardest-hit businesses survive, including those owned by people of color.

The unemployment benefits in the American Rescue Plan are needed to increase the number of families who can pay their bills and avoid unsustainable levels of debt. Continuing the aid through September is minimally necessary. Please reject efforts to shorten the duration or size of assistance. Congress must not return to a pattern of short-term aid followed by destabilizing delays. You can be reassured that workers [will return to jobs](#) when they can, even if their jobless benefits exceed their wages. [Yale researchers](#) found "no evidence that more generous benefits disincentivized work" during the period when the \$600/week benefits were in place, higher than the \$400/week proposed now.

It is critically important to enable people to afford their basic expenses. The pandemic has caused 8 million Americans to fall into poverty, of whom 2.3 million are children. The increases and monthly receipt of Child Tax Credit and increases in the Earned Income Tax Credit included in the American Rescue Plan are extremely well-targeted to help those who need it most. Making the Child Tax Credit

fully refundable means the [39 percent of children](#) in families with incomes too low to benefit fully or at all from the credit will no longer be left behind. (Underscoring racial disparities, close to half of Black and Hispanic children now do not get the full Child Tax Credit but would be helped by the American Rescue Plan.) By cutting child poverty in half, the Plan will improve children's health, development, education, and future economic success. By increasing income through the tax credits and unemployment benefits, raising the minimum wage, increasing nutrition benefits, and the \$1,400 economic impact payments (made available to families with mixed immigration status), people's greater ability to pay their bills and make purchases will provide an essential boost to the economy.

Another long-overdue economic boost will come from providing state, local government, tribal, and territorial aid. For nearly a year, public service workers – nurses, teachers, EMS, custodians, corrections officers, child care providers and so many more – have stood courageously on the front lines of the fight against the pandemic, doing everything in their power to keep their communities safe, healthy and strong. Robust, unrestricted aid is critical to quickly distributing the vaccine, preventing our children from falling behind, reopening shuttered businesses, and eliminating cuts to essential public services that will prolong the health and economic crisis.

Conservative and liberal [economists](#) alike recognize that federal expenditures to prevent public sector worker layoffs and to provide services contribute to economic growth. It has also been [demonstrated](#) that funding for unemployment assistance and SNAP nutrition aid boosts the economy more than most expenditures, because people with low incomes need to spend what they receive on goods and services. For every dollar we spend on these forms of aid, between \$1.30 - \$1.80 is added to the size of the overall economy.

Last week, Federal Reserve Board Chair [Jerome Powell warned](#) of “...losing people's careers, and the lives that they built, because they don't get back to work on time.” He said the damage would be “not just to their lives but to the United States economy — the productive capacity of the economy.”

The American Rescue Plan is not perfect; it could be improved with an increase in federal support for Medicaid in general and for home and community-based services, which is of special importance to people with disabilities and older Americans. Automatic triggers for increases in services linked to increases in unemployment could be included. While additions can be made, proposals for a dramatic decrease in the plan's size and scope would weaken its effectiveness dangerously. Your constituents – and our nation – cannot afford that. Please advance and vote for legislation to adopt the American Rescue Plan.

Sincerely,

20/20 Vision

African American Health Alliance

Alliance for Retired Americans

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs

Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative
Benedictine Sisters
BiNet USA
Bread for the World
Campaign for America's Future
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research
Center for Public Representation
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Advocacy Institute
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Coalition on Human Needs
Communications Workers of America (CWA)
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Congregation of Saint Joseph
Congregation of Sisters of IHM
Congressional Hunger Center
Consumer Action
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
Council on Social Work Education
Criminalization of Poverty Project at the Institute for Policy Studies
Disciples Center for Public Witness
Economic Policy Institute
Family Equality
First Focus Campaign for Children
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Peace Center
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Futures Without Violence
Gay Parent Magazine
Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart
Groundwork Collaborative
Hispanic Federation
IHM Sisters - Justice, Peace and Sustainability Office
Justice for Migrant Women
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
League of United Latin American Citizens
Lincoln
Main Street Alliance
Maternal and Child Health Access

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Medical IMPACT
Migrant Clinicians Network
MomsRising
NAHT
NASTAD
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance of HUD Tenants
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Black Gay Men's Advocacy Coalition
National Black Justice Coalition
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of its low-income clients
National Council of Jewish Women
National Crittenton
National Diaper Bank Network
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Domestic Violence Hotline
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Energy Assistance Directors Association
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Immigration Law Center
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
National Rural Social Work Caucus
National Skills Coalition
National Urban League
National WIC Association
National Women's Law Center
National Working Positive Coalition
NCLR
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
New Progressive Alliance
Oasis Legal Services
Our Developing World
Partnership for America's Children
Pax Christi USA

People's Action
Presbyterian Church of the USA
Pride Community Services Organization
Progressive Democrats of America
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Public Citizen
Rachel Carson Council
Sisters of Charity Federation
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership
Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, Iowa
Social Action Linking Together (SALT)
The AIDS Institute
The National Domestic Violence Hotline
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
United State of Women
Voices for Progress