

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 23, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, McCarthy, and Schumer:

As Congress takes action to advance legislation responding to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the undersigned organizations strongly urge you to advance legislation that ensures all families across our nation have the ability to seek the care they need to stay healthy.

We encourage you to build on past bipartisan efforts and **ensure all individuals have equitable access to testing and treatment for COVID-19; equip states and localities with sufficient financial support to combat the crisis; provide protection and support to the health care workforce and others on the frontlines of the pandemic; assure access and capacity in the health system; and protect against high and unexpected health care costs.**

The United States is facing a public health emergency greater than any we have seen in several generations. As of April 22, the United States had approximately 850,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 48,000 deaths, affecting countless families across the country, from every Congressional district, from every geography, and from every socio-economic level. What's more, evidence is emerging that our communities of color are suffering greater infections and deaths due to COVID 19, exacerbating already profound health disparities.

The following, targeted recommendations will provide immediate support to communities that need relief. We urge you to address these key areas in your next response package:

Ensure access to affordable health insurance coverage. Central to our national defense to COVID-19 is ensuring that every individual in this nation can access screening and treatment. Endangering this goal, COVID-19 has created a significant economic downturn and tens of millions of individuals have lost their jobs, economic security, and their source of employer-sponsored health insurance. To ensure that those who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 can access testing and treatment and medical, mental, oral, and other health needs, it is critical that Congress open and strengthen the individual and work-based health insurance market to the uninsured by providing enhanced premium tax credits and COBRA subsidies; opening a national special enrollment period; and providing financial assistance for low-income, uninsured patients in the health insurance exchange in non-Medicaid expansion states.

We also urge you to leverage Medicaid coverage by offering a state option for 100% Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) for all uninsured individuals, regardless of immigration status, for COVID-19 screening and treatment, and by replicating the 100% FMAP and phasedown for states newly expanding Medicaid. Finally, it is critical that you immediately invest in robust consumer assistance, particularly in the communities hit hardest by the pandemic such as communities of color, to help newly uninsured individuals navigate health programs and enrollment. Such assistance can be the linchpin to assuring that newly unemployed individuals and others know about and are availing themselves of health insurance options available to them and their families.

Provide states, localities, territories, and tribes with the financial support they need. Support for states, localities, territories, and tribes in previous COVID-19 relief packages was inadequate to the scale of the economic downturn and the scope of the pandemic. Congress should build upon previous COVID-19 relief packages and provide states, localities, territories, and tribes the support needed to address public health demands, cover COVID-19 related needs, protect vital state-run programs, and help states absorb the economic impact of this crisis and related economic downturn.

To this end, we urge Congress to provide an additional, short-term increase in FMAP for states, localities, territories, and tribes approximately doubling the percentage increase to FMAP provided for in Section 6008 of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. We also urge that Congress appropriate \$500 billion in additional funding to states, territories, and localities to help them meet budgetary shortfalls, including doubling the levels of funding for the Coronavirus Relief Fund, provided for in Section 5001 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Congress also must maintain current enhanced FMAP funding levels for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Finally, state and localities should be provided the flexibility to protect essential health care providers from economic distress by utilizing federal health care funding to make retainer payments to essential health care providers. All funding policies described above should be provided for the duration of the pandemic and for the recovery period after the pandemic (for example, continued for 12 months after the pandemic ends).

Protect the health and safety of essential workers. Congress must ensure that all workers on the frontlines of this pandemic are safe as they do their jobs. This not only protects their health but also protects the health of all families by maintaining essential services and maximum surge-capacity in the health and long-term care systems. Congress should require full transparency and national coordination around the production, allocation, and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE). To address current safety concerns and prepare the nation for returning to workplaces, Congress also should require the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue an emergency temporary standard on infectious disease that would provide protections to all workers for the duration of the pandemic. Direct Support Professionals, Personal Care Attendants, and other direct care workers should be designated essential personnel to ensure their access to PPE. Finally, Congress should dramatically improve paid sick leave for workers affected by the pandemic by removing exemptions for certain employers, improving the level of support for lower-wage workers, and expanding access to the benefit.

Organize and build national public health capacity to safely move beyond large-scale "lock-downs". The future impact of COVID-19 on our communities is uncertain. Infection and death rates are predicted to increase in the short-term, and experts warn that depending on the effectiveness of our public health

strategies, infections could either resurge, or, we could contain the pandemic and prevent further outbreaks. It is critical that public health experts and science drive our national strategies in combating COVID-19. In addition to fully funding testing supplies and providing a \$4.5 billion annual increase in public health funding to ensure that infrastructure is in place for this and future outbreaks, Congress should fund the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at least \$3.6 billion in emergency supplemental funding to lead state and local efforts to oversee the monitoring and reporting of COVID-19, including comprehensive data collection, as well as to implement testing, tracing, and quarantine plans.

Congress also should ensure that experts at the CDC are leading and coordinating efforts with the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Defense (DOD), private payers, and providers to identify new approaches, best practices, and supporting tools to develop effective COVID-19 strategies as the pandemic's impact on our nation evolves. Moreover, U.S. federal agencies at the forefront of the public health response, including the CDC, should be provided flexibility in their procurement and hiring process to act as quickly as possible to secure the public health resources they need to fight the pandemic.

Given the growing evidence that this pandemic is disproportionately sickening and killing communities of color, it is critical that Congress require that CDC and the federal agencies develop strategies to combat COVID-19 that are focused on the unique needs of this population. Moreover, it is critical that Congress require that health and economic data based on race and ethnicity about the impact of the pandemic be collected, made available to researchers, and reported quickly and on a rolling-basis by CDC and other federal and state bodies.

Protect patient access to care and prohibit price gouging of health care services. To ensure that individuals have access to safe health care, Congress should provide that telemedicine services are subject to payment parity across all payers. Additionally, as families struggle with both health and economic uncertainties, Congress should enact comprehensive consumer protections from surprise medical bills and prevent price gouging of consumer medical equipment and provider medical equipment. As vaccines and treatment for COVID-19 are developed, Congress must ensure that these drugs remain accessible and affordable to all families by requiring that manufacturers keep prices low and rapidly scale-up production.

Prioritize the health of older adults, people with disabilities, and vulnerable populations. Older adults and people with disabilities are most at risk from both the virus and the range of harms caused by isolation during strict physical distancing. Risk is particularly high in nursing homes where in the first two weeks of April more than 3,000 deaths from COVID-19 have been reported across the United States. In addition to the other recommendations that support these populations we urge Congress to take these additional actions.

Without additional resources to support access to Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) and the workforce that provides them, aging adults and people with disabilities risk being forced into congregate settings, at grave risk to their health. First, targeted grants must be provided to states to increase HCBS to ensure older adults and people with disabilities can receive the services they need in their homes and communities rather than nursing facilities. Secondly, states need additional flexibility to make retainer payments to HCBS providers to protect the fragile network of entities that provide services to beneficiaries.

We request Congressional authority for states to make retainer payments to any Medicaid-enrolled provider for both the duration of the pandemic and the recovery period following the pandemic.

Prioritize children’s health and well-being during the pandemic. While children make up a relatively small portion of the coronavirus patient population, almost every aspect of their daily lives has been disrupted by COVID-19. From the lack of access to well child visits, their regular child care providers, and education in schools; to increased family stress and economic instability due to job loss; and increased anxiety related to isolation; the crisis is having a devastating impact on children’s health, and mental and emotional well-being.

In addition to continuous, affordable coverage through Medicaid, CHIP, the individual market or employers, Congress must also ensure that children’s access to routine services and supports are maintained through new and innovative methods. Specifically, children must be able to utilize telehealth whenever possible to maintain consistent access to their health care providers and the prevention, screening, and treatment services they need to ensure their well-being, including behavioral health, occupational health, and speech therapy services. Congress also must take immediate action to prevent and respond to the rise in child abuse and neglect stemming from COVID-related stress, especially when children lack interactions with the mandatory reporters (health care providers, educators, etc.) that would be most likely to identify these issues. This includes an immediate increase in funding for child welfare programs like CAPTA’s Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention grants, the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program, and the Title IV-E Prevention Program.

Ensure robust oversight of response efforts. Finally, it is critical that during this national emergency, we are rapidly and effectively evaluating the nation’s complex response. To this end, the role of Inspector General (IG) has never been more important, and we urge Congress to protect the IG’s oversight capacity of the national response to COVID-19.

We stand ready to provide detailed specifications and technical assistance regarding each recommendation above. We urge you to act swiftly. This pandemic has affected every person in America, from every walk of life. The COVID-19 pandemic makes clear that our collective future is secure only when everyone in our nation has the opportunity for good health and is able to safely get the health care they need, when they need it. Please reach out to Jane Sheehan, Senior Federal Relations Manager at Families USA, JSheehan@familiesusa.org to discuss any of these recommendations.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Families USA
1,000 Days
A Voice of Reason
ACA Consumer Advocacy
ACCESS
ADAP Advocacy Association
African American Health Alliance

Aging Life Care Association
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth &
Families
Allergy & Asthma Network
Alliance for Retired Americans
America's ToothFairy: National Children's Oral
Health Foundation
American Art Therapy Association

American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry	Consumer Action
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work	Crohn's & Colitis Foundation
American Association of Public Health Dentistry	Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
American Association of Suicidology	Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa Peace and Justice Office
American Association on Health and Disability	Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
American Diabetes Association	Epilepsy Foundation
American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees	Epilepsy Information Service of Wake Forest School of Medicine
American Federation of Teachers	First Focus Campaign for Children
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention	Global Justice Institute, Metropolitan Community Churches
American Kidney Fund	GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer
American Medical Student Association	Guttmacher Institute
American Muslim Health Professionals	Health Care for America Now (HCAN)
American Psychological Association	Health Care Voices
American Public Health Association	Health Care Voter
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum	HealthBegins
Association for Community Affiliated Plans	HealthConnect One
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations	HealthHIV
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors	Healthy Schools Campaign
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America	Help Me Grow National Center
Autistic Self Advocacy Network	Hispanic Federation
Beech Acres Parenting Center	HIV Dental Alliance
Benevis Practice Services	Human Rights Campaign
Beyond Flexner Alliance	Indivisible
Brain Injury Association of America	Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)	Jon C Burr Foundation
Center for Medicare Advocacy	Justice in Aging
Center for Public Representation	Lakeshore Foundation
Child Welfare League of America	Little Lobbyists
Childhelp	Long Term Care Community Coalition
Children's Advocacy Institute	Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Children's Defense Fund	March for Moms
Children's Health Fund	March of Dimes
Children's HealthWatch	Medicaid Medicare CHIP Services Dental Association
CIR-SEIU Committee of Interns & Residents	Medicare Rights Center
Coalition for Disability Health Equity	Mental Health America
Coalition for Hemophilia B Inc.	Mi Familia Vota
Coalition of Labor Union Women	Mom Congress
Coalition on Human Needs	MomsRising
Community Access National Network	
Congregation of Our Lady of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces	

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)	National Network for Youth
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD)	National Organization for Women
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd	National Partnership for Women & Families
National Alliance for Medicaid in Education	National Respite Coalition
National Alliance on Mental Illness	National Rural Health Association
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health	National Urban League
National Association for Rural Mental Health	National WIC Association
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)	National Women's Health Network
National Association of Community Health Workers	National Council on Aging
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities	NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
National Association of Counties	Nurse-Family Partnership
National Association of County and City Health Officials	Nursing First LLC
National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors	OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
National Association of Dental Plans	Oral Health Nursing Education Program (OHNEP)
National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics	Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN)
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners	Oxfam America
National Association of School Nurses	Partners in Health
National Association of Social Workers	Pathways for Rare and Orphan Studies
National Birth Equity Collaborative	Pax Christi USA
National Black Nurses Association	PFLAG National
National Center for Healthy Housing	PIH Engage
National Center for Transgender Equality	Planned Parenthood Federation of America
National Center on Adoption and Permanency	Planning Alternatives for Change
National Child Care Association	Population Health Alliance
National Coalition on Health Care	Post-Polio Health International
National Consumers League	Postpartum Support International
National Council of Jewish Women	Power to Decide
National Crittenton	Prevent Blindness
National Eating Disorders Association	Prevention Institute
National Employment Law Project	Primary Care Collaborative
National Equality Action Team	Primary Care Development Corporation (PCDC)
National Family Support Network	Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator
National Health Care for the Homeless Council	Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
National Health Law Program	Public Sector HealthCare Roundtable
National Hispanic Council on Aging	PWF Consulting
National Immigration Law Center	Residential Eating Disorders Consortium
National Institute for Children's Health Quality (NICHQ)	RESULTS
	Santa Fe Group
	School-Based Health Alliance
	Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
	Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership
	SMART Recovery
	Social Security Works

Society of State Leaders of Health and Physical Education
 Swipe Out Hunger
 The AIDS Institute
 The Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
 The American Institute of Dental Public Health
 The Arc of the United States
 The ATA (American Telemedicine Association)
 The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy and Innovation
 The Gerontological Society of America
 The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
 Third Way
 Transgender Law Center
 Treatment Action Group
 Triage Cancer
 Trust for America's Health
 United States of Care
 United Way Worldwide
 Universal Health Care Action Network
 Universities Allied for Essential Medicines
 Voices for Progress
 Whitman-Walker Health and Whitman-Walker Institute
 Young Invincibles
 Union for Reform Judaism
 UNITE HERE
 Arthritis Foundation
 National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors

Alabama

AIDS Alabama

Alaska

Alaska Children's Trust

Arizona

Arizona Oral Health Coalition
 Asian Pacific Community in Action
 Child and Family Resources, Inc.
 Children's Action Alliance
 Southern Arizona Oral Health Coalition (SAzOHC)
 Unlimited Potential

West Valley Neighborhoods Coalition

Arkansas

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families
 Arkansas Community Organizations

California

Brighter Beginnings
 California Association for Adult Day Services
 California Dental Association
 California Health Advocates
 California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
 Center for Health Equity, University of California, San Francisco
 Children Now
 Coalition of Orange County Community Health Centers
 Community Health Councils
 Community Health Partnership of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties
 Dientes Community Dental Care
 Equality California
 Give for a Smile
 Health Access California
 Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles
 Maternal and Child Health Access
 Mid-City CAN (Community Advocacy Network)
 Orange County United Way
 Partners in Care Foundation
 PDI Surgery Center
 Regional Asthma Management and Prevention
 San Fernando Community Health Center
 San Francisco AIDS Foundation
 The Children's Partnership
 The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy and Innovation
 Venice Family Clinic

Colorado

Center for Health Progress
 Colorado Consumer Health Initiative
 Colorado School Medicaid Consortium
 Tri-County Health Network

Connecticut

Health Equity Solutions
Mental Health Connecticut
National Association of Social Workers Connecticut
Chapter
The Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, Inc.
Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut

District of Columbia

La Clinica del Pueblo
Rebuilding Independence My Style
TENAC (DC Tenants' Advocacy Coalition)

Delaware

Christian Council of Delmarva
Delaware Ecumenical Council
Office of Christian Unity

Florida

Catalyst Miami
Democratic Disability Caucus of Florida
Democratic Disability Caucus of Polk County
Farmworker's Self-Help
Florida Institute for Health Innovation
Florida Voices for Health
Healthy Start Coalition of Orange County

Georgia

Georgians for a Healthy Future

Hawaii

Hawaii Disability Rights Center

Idaho

Idaho Oral Health Alliance

Illinois

AIDS Foundation of Chicago
Champaign County Health Care Consumers
EverThrive Illinois
Health & Medicine Policy Research Group
Heartland Alliance
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness

Protect Our Care Illinois
Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Southern Illinois People for Progress

Iowa

Child and Family Policy Center
Sisters of Charity, BVM
Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, Iowa

Kansas

Johnson County Dental Care
NBC Community Development Corporation
Oral Health Kansas

Kentucky

Advocacy Action Network
Kentucky Equal Justice Center
Kentucky Oral Health Coalition
Kentucky Youth Advocates
McNary Group
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province
Leadership

Louisiana

Lawyer's Reentry Consulting
Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families

Maine

American Academy of Pediatrics, Maine Chapter
Maine Consumers for Affordable Health Care
Maine Council on Aging
Maine Oral Health Coalition
Partnership for Children's Oral Health
SeniorsPlus
The Bingham Program

Maryland

Community Development Network of MD
High Note Consulting, LLC
Laurel Advocacy and Referral Services, Inc.
Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative

Massachusetts

Health Care for All Massachusetts

Michigan

Detroit Community Health Connection
Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health
Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health
Michigan League for Public Policy
Michigan Oral Health Coalition
Mother Strong Maternal Infant Health Program, LLC
United Health Organization
United Way for Southeastern Michigan

Minnesota

Apple Tree Dental
Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church
Minnesota Oral Health Coalition
SEIU Healthcare Minnesota
TakeAction Minnesota
West Central Initiative

Mississippi

Mississippi Center for Justice

Missouri

Missouri Budget Project
Missouri Health Care for All
Women's Voices Raised for Social Justice

Nebraska

Nebraska Appleseed

Nevada

Nevada Disability Advocacy & Law Center
Silver State Equality-Nevada
Culinary Union Local 226

New Hampshire

Advocates Building Lasting Equality in NH
New Hampshire Oral Health Coalition

New Jersey

BlueWaveNJ
Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers
Hyacinth AIDS Foundation
New Jersey Appleseed Public Interest Law Center
New Jersey Citizen Action

New Jersey Oral Health Coalition
New Jersey Policy Perspective

New Mexico

Aspen copies & office supplies
Casa de Salud
Disability Rights New Mexico
Health Action New Mexico
New Mexico Oral Health Coalition

New York

A&M and Associates
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY
Central Nassau Guidance and Counseling Services
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
CN Guidance and Counseling Services
Grand St. Settlement
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition
Health Migration Consulting Inc.
Healthcare Education Project
Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley, Inc.
M&M Medical Management
Medicaid Matters New York
New York Immigration Coalition
New York Legal Assistance Group
New York State Oral Health Coalition
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
Southern Tier ADAPT
Southern Tier Independence Center
Special Support Services

North Carolina

Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy
Epilepsy Alliance North Carolina
Equality North Carolina
NC Child
Pisgah Legal Services

Ohio

Children's Defense Fund-Ohio
Directions for Youth & Families
Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans Educational
Fund

The Ohio Council of Churches

Oklahoma

Oklahoma Policy Institute

Oregon

Oregon Community Health Workers Association

Pennsylvania

Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of
the Elderly (CARIE)

Consumer Health Coalition

Family First Health

HIAS Pennsylvania

Just Harvest

PA Coalition for Oral Health

Pennsylvania Council of Churches

Pennsylvania Head Start Association

Pennsylvania Health Access Network

The 99% Pennsylvania

Women's Law Project

Rhode Island

Protect Our Healthcare Coalition RI

South Carolina

SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center

Sea Island Action Network

South Dakota

Toothology, Inc.

Tennessee

A Voice for the Reduction of Poverty in Nashville and
Beyond

Disability Rights Tennessee

Rural Health Association of Tennessee

Tennessee Justice Center

The Nashville Jewish Social Justice Roundtable

Texas

Center for Public Policy Priorities

Human Rights Initiative of North Texas

La Unión del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)

Mental Health America of Greater Dallas

MHP Salud

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Texas

National Association of Social Workers - Texas
Chapter

Proyecto Azteca

Texas Democrats with Disabilities

Texas Oral Health Coalition, Inc.

Texas Parent to Parent

Utah

Epilepsy Foundation Utah

Senior Charity Care Foundation

Utah Health Policy Project

Voices for Utah Children

Vermont

Addison County Community Trust

Southern Vermont Area Health Education Center

The Office of the Health Care Advocate, Vermont
Legal Aid

Virginia

Central Virginia Health Services, Inc.

Social Action Linking Together (SALT)

Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations

Virginia Health Catalyst

Virginia Organizing

Virginia Poverty Law Center

Washington

Arcora Foundation

Bermuda Associates LLC

Foundation for Healthy Generations

Health Care Is a Human Right WA

Northwest Harvest

Northwest Health Law Advocates

Partners for Our Children

Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action

Smile Spokane

Toothsavers of Washington

Toppenish Community Chest

West Virginia

West Virginians for Affordable Health Care

Wisconsin

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice

Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association

Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources