



Children and Families Need \$2,000 a Month to Weather This Crisis

Children and families struggling to make ends meet need more than just a one-time payment. Families need a larger and recurring monthly payment of \$2,000 a month for every adult and child for the duration of the economic downturn. Families with children are disproportionately feeling the effects of this crisis. We all benefit when children and their families are fully supported.

For [Tamara Solis of Los Angeles, CA](#) it was a choice between paying rent and putting food on the table for her children or paying the internet bill so her kids could keep up with their school work. With family income falling and children out of school as the COVID-19 crisis grinds communities across the country to a halt, many families like Tamara's find themselves without the cash they need to navigate these trying times and are forced to make difficult choices. For Tamara, it now means regular visits to a friend's tiny apartment to get her kids online in hopes they can keep up with their school work. While they do their best to keep a safe distance, the place is small and each outing puts them at risk of exposure to the virus.

A one-time payment won't cut it for America's children and families.

On March 27, 2020, the CARES Act was signed into law. It provided one-time direct cash payments of up to \$1,200 per adult and \$500 per child to households meeting certain income and citizenship requirements. For the millions of cash-strapped families scrambling to meet their recurring obligations—rent, groceries, utilities, health care, and much more—a one-time payment helps in the immediate term, but falls far short of what they need to weather the economic storm for months to come. [According to a recent poll](#), **31 percent of recipients expect payments to sustain them for less than a month, and 64 percent say less than three months.**

As the COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged our economy and way of life, more than [30 million people have already lost their jobs](#). [More than 50 percent of all low-income families](#) live in households where they or someone they know have lost their job or taken a pay cut. Those numbers are even worse for Black and

Latino households, where family members are more likely to work in frontline and hourly jobs that are extremely susceptible to layoffs.

These families, whose incomes have plummeted or been wiped out altogether, need help fast. Without robust federal support, [one study estimates that child poverty could balloon from an already shameful 13.6 percent](#) to nearly 21 percent, with Black and Latino children bearing a disproportionate risk of falling into or deeper into poverty.

The federal response to date is far from adequate. While unemployment insurance (UI) helps alleviate some of the financial strain from this crisis for many middle-income families, it [fails to reach lower-income families equally](#). Families who are not in the labor force and the millions of workers who have lost income but not their jobs because of this crisis do not qualify for UI. Moreover, many of the workers who are eligible for increased UI have not yet received it due to antiquated and overburdened UI systems across the country.

“[Amber MacQuarri of New Hampshire](#) is a single mother of two. She had to shut down her in-home child care center in March because she has lupus and the risks to her health during the coronavirus crisis were too high. The stimulus money will help cover her expenses for the next four weeks or so. **“Even though I’m OK now, I’m scared to death I won’t be in a month, and frankly, I don’t know what I’ll do,”** she said.



[Kristian Lamb in Columbus, GA](#) received a \$1,200 payment, which she used to pay accumulated bills. But she didn't get the additional \$1,500 she expected for her three children under age 12, and she can't figure out why. "It is hard being a single mother of three...I only can just sit around and wait and just try to survive," she said.

Congress must provide monthly payments of \$2,000 for every adult and child throughout this crisis.

The federal government must deliver direct cash payments to every adult and child in need. Direct cash assistance is fast, [efficient](#), and [well-targeted to those who need it most](#).

Any direct cash assistance program must meet the following criteria:

1. Payments must be big enough to ensure that families can make ends meet with at least \$2,000 for each adult and child;
2. Payments must be easily available to everyone in need, especially low-income families, underbanked communities through preloaded EBT cards, and those who did not qualify for the first round of payments through the CARES Act; and
3. Payments must be made monthly until the economic crisis subsides.

Every adult—and every child—should receive a payment of \$2,000 a month. This cash will ensure that families get money as quickly as possible and have the flexibility to pay their bills, cover their rent, seek necessary health care, and put food on the table, all of which will also help stimulate the economy. The \$2,000 payment for both adults and children is based on [a proposal introduced in March by Senators Brown, Bennet, and Booker](#).

Federal estimates show the monthly cost of raising a child—including housing, food, clothing, health care, child care and education, among other things—ranges between \$1,000 and \$2,000 a month. Unfortunately, the payment disparity built into the CARES Act meant that a two-adult household with no children received more money (\$2,400) than a single parent with two children (\$2,200). We know that [single parents, especially single mothers of color, are already more likely to live in poverty and experience economic insecurity](#). During this pandemic, families need more support as they deal with not only the high cost of raising children but also the additional pressure to act as breadwinners, caregivers, playmates, and educators for their children all at the same time.

Additionally, Congress must expand cash assistance for groups excluded from direct assistance under the CARES Act including:

- immigrant workers and their families (both ITIN filers and mixed-status households);
- dependent children over the age of 16;
- older youth claimed as dependents by their parents; and
- children living with kinship caregivers outside the formal child welfare system.

The Treasury Department must also identify everyone eligible for these payments and make sure payments actually get to them, especially people who are low-income and don't file taxes, are unbanked, or are experiencing homelessness.

Direct cash payments should continue monthly until the economy recovers so American families can stay afloat and provide ongoing stimulus to the economy. The need for such ongoing assistance is clear: the [Congressional Budget Office estimates](#) the unemployment rate will rise to 16 percent during 2020 and remain above 10 percent through next year.

Congress should continue these payments until the unemployment rate returns to its pre-crisis levels, and after the crisis ends, payments should restart if the economy falters. Americans are demanding robust and comprehensive action to support our communities through the pandemic: [a recent poll showed 70 percent of Americans agree that Congress needs to do more](#).

After these payments phase out, we need permanent policy changes to reduce child poverty.

Once the COVID-19 pandemic and economic fallout passes, and the direct cash assistance program winds down, Congress should adopt permanent measures to ensure children and families are *always* supported. A fully refundable and expanded Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), coupled with increases to basic needs programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and housing vouchers would lift millions of children out of poverty and strengthen our nation's economic future.