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May 7, 2020

The Honorable Richard Neal
Chairman
House Ways and Means Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington D.C., 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington D.C., 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
House Energy and Commerce Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington D.C., 20515

The Honorable Maxine Waters
Chairwoman
House Financial Services Committee
United States House of Representatives
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The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
House Education and Labor Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney
Chair
House Oversight and Government Reform Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C., 20515

Chairman Neal, Chairwoman Lowey, Chair Maloney, Chairwoman Waters, Chairman Scott, and Chairman Pallone:

Americans across this country need more assistance as the COVID-19 outbreak has now surpassed a month. Today, nearly 30 million Americans have filed for unemployment, our essential workers do not have adequate protections, and our retirees are worried about their economic security. It is clear that another COVID-19 stimulus package is needed, and that it must include provisions to protect our most vulnerable populations – including our seniors and our school children – and reinforce institutions that provide essential services.

First and foremost, in order to better protect the health and wellbeing of our citizens in this time, Congress should authorize reopening the Affordable Care Act (ACA) marketplace, allowing anyone to purchase health insurance as they need. It is critical that Americans who need adequate health insurance due to their work, family, or economic situation are able to access it. Congress should also authorize the automatic enrollment of individuals who have \$19,000 or less in income and limited savings in the Medicare Savings Programs.

Steps must be taken to reduce costs of prescription drugs by waiving drug copays during this outbreak. And we must expand telehealth services so that those who are in need of regular health care assistance can access those services via the internet or telephone for the duration of this public health crisis.

Additionally, we have to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 testing to states like Iowa as well as ensure access to COVID-19 antibody testing once that becomes available. In Iowa, we have seen cases rising steadily in some areas, and we have some of the fastest-growing outbreaks in the nation. While earlier efforts may have focused on 'hot spots' in larger and more densely populated areas, my constituents and frontline workers are in equal need of increased testing and protective supplies. This upcoming package should include language to ensure Iowa is able to access testing and supplies on an equitable level to any other state.

I believe one of the best ways to protect Iowans and families across this country is to expand support for paid Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Currently, there is a cap on requiring paid FMLA at 500 employees or less. This arbitrary cap leaves hundreds of thousands of workers without access to necessary leave. That is why I have included my tiered paid FMLA proposal that scales federal assistance to both size and revenue of a business. This model will support far more workers across the country than the current system while supporting businesses in a way that matches their economic ability to provide assistance. I have attached that proposal to this letter.

This public health crisis has also demonstrated that we need more protection and support for those in retirement. First, we must include the Butch Lewis Act to shore up endangered multiemployer pensions which, due to economic fallout, are at risk of failing. Without financial assistance, we could see our seniors and retirees suffering as their pensions dry up. In addition, we need to provide short-term funding to make up for coronavirus-related shortfalls and ensure that older Americans who rely on their retirement and Social Security benefits are protected.

We know that education is an investment into our nation's future. As students work to continue their education online, Congress must ensure that all our educational institutions are able to support the changing needs of students. Congress must include increased school funding for the direct purpose of increasing K-12 teacher pay, which helps retain our teachers and ensure our students have access to qualified teachers. Additionally, we need to include individual schools under PPP, ensuring that any school facing a financial crisis can apply for assistance. Finally, we must support our higher education institutions by creating waivers for emergency assistance with the Department of Education.

Of course, accessing online education means we need to provide every American with high-speed internet. That is why we must focus on getting fast broadband internet access across the entire country, especially in our rural areas that lack connectivity. This pandemic has demonstrated that affordable high-speed internet access should be accessible to every American in order to do schoolwork, run their business, receive online medical care, stay connected with family, or find assistance. We must also work to remove data caps and service limitations during this pandemic. That is why any COVID-19 stimulus package must include expanding internet access now and investing in a nationwide broadband structure for the future.

We must also ensure that the United States Postal Service (USPS) remains operational, as mandated by the Constitution. The best way to ensure the long-term stability of the USPS is to remove red tape and repeal the excessive requirement that they must pre-fund their pension accounts 70 years in advance. Improving USPS' long-term stability ensures that USPS continues

to deliver mail to every community, specifically our smaller and more rural communities. USPS service in every community means that you can live and operate a business anywhere in the United States, unlike private shipping companies who regularly refuse to provide service to smaller, rural communities they don't see as profitable.

Another important way to support our communities is to expand support for rental assistance. No family should face eviction from their housing because they lost their income due to COVID-19. While evictions are currently on hold, we can do more to ensure that renters stay in their homes as the economy returns. Additionally, to better support both renters and homeowners, I am calling for inclusion of my Coronavirus Housing Counseling Improvement Act to help everyone navigate housing assistance while working to reduce their costs. I have attached the text of that bill to this letter.

Our nonprofits and charitable organizations are also suffering in this time – including those who provide food or assistance to communities that have reported over 100% increases in need in just a few short weeks. Meanwhile, they have also been negatively impacted by lost revenues which only compounds the difficulty of serving our communities. That is why we need to include legislation to expand the Universal Charitable Deduction, allowing donations made to local charitable organizations this year to be deducted on 2019 tax forms, and extend that deduction through 2020. It is equally important to expand the Paycheck Protection Program to 501(c) nonprofits and quasi-governmental organizations that do not currently qualify for PPP, while also increasing financing for PPP. We must also include the Community Meals Fund, which gives nonprofit grants to small and midsize restaurants to prepare food and hire staff, which will ensure our communities continue to have access to hot and fresh meals during this crisis.

Sincerely,



Cindy Axne
Member of Congress