

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

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