



CREATING GOOD JOBS, A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT, AND A FAIR AND THRIVING ECONOMY

## **COVID-19 Federal Response & Economic Stimulus – BlueGreen Alliance Legislative Priorities**

Congress took the first steps to address the immediate economic impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic when it passed legislation to provide paid time off to some workers and boost unemployment insurance, among other measures. This was a positive start, but facing an economy that will likely lose millions of jobs by this summer, more is needed and it is needed now.

**Congress must develop an economic stimulus package focused on working people and the public good.**

A stimulus package must safeguard working peoples' jobs, homes, and livelihoods. And it must also include investments that will provide for a sustained economic recovery. Some companies and industries will need support, and we believe this must come with conditions to avoid permanent layoffs, secure jobs, and provide safe and fair working conditions. Simply handing over billions of dollars without standards would be unwise and would virtually ensure workers do not see the direct benefit of their hard-earned tax dollars. Working people must see the gains from any package.

We urge Congress to immediately pass a robust set of stimulus packages that meet the following standards, principles, and conditions and incorporate the policy priorities outlined below.

### **Overarching Standards/Principles:**

- Ensure all projects built with public resources are subject to Buy America standards that maximize the return to taxpayers and the American economy;
- Enforce Davis-Bacon provisions that ensure workers are paid prevailing wages;
- Utilize project labor agreements (PLA), community benefit agreements (CBA), local hire, and other provisions and practices;
- Drive forward-looking planning and investments that meet environmental standards and build resilient infrastructure systems and communities;
- Ensure that we “Buy Clean” to prioritize use of the most efficient, resilient, and cleanest materials and products with the lowest carbon and toxicity footprints and “Buy Fair” to enhance labor standards, workers' rights, career pathways, equity and community benefits;

- Enhance and enforce hiring and procurement policies that benefit low-income communities, people of color, and women;
- Prioritize investments in those communities most in need;
- Workers and families must receive the majority of the benefits of any federal aid package and aid will be clawed back if workers don't benefit; and
- Ensure adequate enforcement, including an outside oversight board with the authority to periodically review recipient compliance and adequate funding for state and local enforcement to ensure construction projects truly meet PLAs, CBAs and other workforce provision requirements.

**Corporate Relief Must be Contingent on the Following Conditions:**

- Providing mandatory paid sick leave and a \$15 minimum wage for all direct employees;
- Ensuring no layoffs, no benefits cuts, and no dividend or stock buybacks;
- Respect for collective bargaining agreements and workers' organizing rights such as neutrality, majority sign-up, and first contract arbitration and no hiring of anti-union consultants;
- For major rescues, install workers on boards, equity stake, other measures to ensure continued alignment with public interest;
- Workers and their benefits must be protected in bankruptcy proceedings (S. 2518, 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Protecting Employees and Retirees in Business Bankruptcies Act of 2018)
- Companies must permanently comply with the requirements in Workers' Right to Training Act (S. 2468) to ensure any investments in technology or automation, which may be accelerated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, are predicated on worker consultation and training.

**Policy Priorities:**

**Pillar 1: Address Working People and Families' Immediate Needs**

**Protect the most vulnerable; safeguard working peoples' jobs, homes, and livelihoods; and shore up essential public services.**

- **Ensure access to and affordable care for COVID-19 patients, including accessible and affordable testing;**
- **Protect the health and safety of healthcare workers, emergency, and critical infrastructure workers:**
  - Ensuring hospitals and healthcare professionals and emergency workers (doctors, nurses, caregivers, custodial staff, etc.) have the equipment they need right now, including adequate personal protective equipment (PPE);

- Requiring Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue emergency temporary standards for all frontline workers;
- Ensuring child care for frontline healthcare workers;
- Allow workers to have a right to self-quarantine if they are concerned about exposure to the virus, and protection from termination if they are quarantined;
- Ensuring workers who provide direct patient care and emergency services are compensated with hazardous duty pay; and
- Rapidly construct new hospital annex facilities to care for COVID-19 patients.
- **Ensure adequate supports for education professionals during school closures:**
  - Requiring response plans for students with special needs (e.g., students from low-income families who rely on school food services for daily meals), those in special facilities (e.g., juvenile justice facilities) as well as those who do not speak English as their first language;
  - Ensuring protections are in place for custodial staff tasked with decontaminating facilities impacted by COVID-19 (e.g., additional PPE and safety training on new disinfectants);
  - Enabling and supporting school-district plans for continuity of instruction during school closures, including learning packets and specific guidance for online learning; and
  - Compensating educational professionals working additional hours to ensure children and parents are prepared and safe.
- **Protect workers jobs, wages, and benefits:**
  - Provide immediate support for state and municipality budgets to keep their public sector employees—such as police officers, fire departments, municipal services and educators—employed.
  - Expanding unemployment insurance expansions with no waiting period, an allowance for extensions, and ensuring “zero hour” schedule employees are eligible;
  - Extending unemployment insurance to gig workers and those currently excluded (restaurant, etc.) and the self-employed;
  - Expanding UI work-sharing eligibility to avoid layoffs;
  - Ensuring that workers in all sectors—and at companies of all sizes—have access to paid sick leave for themselves and family members;
  - Ensuring that a workers’ leave for COVID-19 is separate from their existing leave, and that they are eligible at any time they are employed;
  - Protecting workers’ healthcare and pension plans and coverage of missed contributions due to missed work;
  - Permitting all workers who can perform their duties remotely to do so;
  - Increasing Medicaid and SNAP, WIC and the school lunch program disbursements to states and allow for extensions; and
  - Issue a moratorium on all evictions, foreclosures, and utility shut-offs; and

- Prohibit the Federal Labor Relations Authority from using COVID-19 response as an excuse to deprive federal employees of their collective bargaining rights.
- **Safeguard transit:**
  - Immediately ensure continuity of transit service by directly supplementing operating funding;
  - Provide increased assistance for capital expenses through Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development (BUILD), Capital Investment Grants (CIG), and other programs, to ensure the continued growth and reliability of transit;
  - Include sufficient funds for sanitation of buses and fixed guideway transport; and
  - Protect against transit service cuts (a downward spiral for ridership) and prevent layoffs.
- **Protect rail and air workers and services and guarantee public benefits:**
  - Provide emergency funding for intercity passenger rail (Amtrak) to prevent layoffs;
  - Guarantee any bailout of air carriers includes protection against layoffs, public equity share, bailout oversight mechanisms, and investment in energy efficiency; and
  - Tie any funds that are authorized to bailout U.S. airlines to concrete GHG reduction commitments (50% by 2050).
- **Protect jobs, workers and U.S. competitiveness throughout the manufacturing supply chain:**
  - Provide bridge loans for impacted small and medium sized manufacturers throughout the manufacturing supply chains, with worker protections;
  - Invoke the Defense Production Act to utilize idled facilities to manufacture critical medical equipment during the crisis.
  - Invest immediately to ensure and where necessary expand domestic supply chain manufacturing of critical medical equipment (masks, gloves, respirators, etc.) to prevent future shortages, and ensure production of essential goods; and
  - Ensure health and safety equipment, supplies, and procedures are available to protect all essential workers.

## **Pillar 2: Rebuild the Public Sector and Services**

**Rebuild the capacity of the public sector, the health care system, education, and community-based resources to prepare for and respond to crises.**

- **Ensure adequate funding and staffing:**
  - At all levels of government, the public sector must be fully equipped. There must be full investment in the public sector and public services to ensure we have the people and resources we need.
- **Rebuilding the capacity of healthcare systems, education, and community-based resources:**

- Modernize and upgrade our MUSH buildings (Municipal, University, School, and Hospital);
- Reauthorize the Hill-Burton Act, which provides money for hospital infrastructure, healthcare infrastructure and a pilot program for community-based care infrastructure development, with requirements for energy efficient and climate resilient design to ensure longer-term public benefits;
- Direct funds to address critical school infrastructure by passing the Rebuild America's Schools Act (HR 865);
- Reduce air pollution in schools, especially those with child care operations by passing the Clean Air, Sharp Minds Act (S. 3364);
- Boost the Healthy High-Performance Schools grant program by adding additional funding and allowing for direct action (remediation, testing, monitoring, inspections) for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs); and
- Municipal, healthcare and school systems, and other public services must work to address provisions for mental health support services for staff, students, and families during and after a pandemic.
- **Provide resources for planning and support** to ensure the public sector and those providing public services can properly respond to pandemics and other crises:
  - Ensure that public and private entities have adequately prepared and tested preparedness plans. Workers must play an active role in the development of these plans;
  - School systems must proactively develop plans describing the potential impact of a crisis (e.g., a pandemic or climate related disaster) on student learning (e.g., student and staff absences, school closings, and extracurricular activities) and develop alternative procedures to ensure continuity of instruction and continuity-of-operations plan for essential central office functions, including payroll and ongoing communications with students and parents; and
    - Communication plans must take into account language, culture and reading-level appropriateness and must be routinely tested on any communication platform used in the plan (e.g., hotlines, telephone trees, dedicated websites, and local radio or TV stations).
  - Healthcare systems must also proactively develop plans providing describing impacts on healthcare workers during a pandemic;
    - All workers (doctors, nurses, caregivers, custodial staff, etc.) should be supplied with all necessary and recommended equipment and working conditions so they are ready to keep themselves, their patients and their families healthy;
    - Develop a communications plan to ensure that healthcare workers have clear guidance on the protocols for protection and prevention of exposure to the virus; and
    - Ensure essential healthcare employees have childcare in the event that schools and daycares are closed.

### **Pillar 3: Invest in Our Nation's Infrastructure**

**Provide a much-needed jolt to our economy while delivering good jobs and public health and climate benefits to communities.**

- **Establish a National Infrastructure Bank** that would serve to identify transportation, energy, and water infrastructure projects in need of funding and match private sector investments or money from local governments with loans made by the bank;
- **Provide immediate cash infusions for critical water infrastructure programs:**
  - Increase funding for Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs) and permanently extend Buy America provisions for Drinking Water SRF;
  - Increase funding for the Army Corps of Engineers;
  - Create a grant program to assist low-income households with water and sewer services; and
  - Complete Lead Service Line (LSL) in all homes and child care centers.
- **Invest in transportation;**
  - Increase funding and financing for DOT's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and enhance block and competitive grant programs to spur integrated community infrastructure investment, deliver local environmental and economic development benefits, and expand clean and affordable options for transit between communities:
    - These programs include DOT's BUILD (formerly TIGER), Private Activity Bonds, the National Highway Freight Program, TIFIA, and RIFF, and Capital Investment Grants (CIG)—including New Starts, Small Starts, and Core Capacity.
  - Enhance funding for programs that enable the federal government, states, and localities to increasingly test, purchase, and deploy domestically manufactured electric municipal and school buses and other public and government fleets:
    - This includes programs such as DOT's Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Improvement and Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Program, EPA's Diesel Emissions Reductions Act (ERA), LoNo grant program, and DOE's Vehicle Technologies Program.
  - Increase funding for key programs targeted at spurring low-carbon freight deployment, including:
    - DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) Vehicle Technologies Office (VTO) program; and
    - DOT's Private Activity Bonds, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program, Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment program, National Highway Freight Program, Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA).
  - Deploy electric vehicle(EV) charging infrastructure:

- Support wide scale deployment of highway and community EV charging infrastructure as in Rep. Levin’s “EV Freedom Act” (H.R. 5770), and provisions in Rep Rush’s “NO EXHAUST Act” (H.R. 5545); and
  - Support the DOT Vehicles Technologies Office to provide competitive grants to states or utilities to ramp up financing for EV infrastructure,
- **Modernize our electric grid**
  - Provide financial and technical support to state and local regulators, planning agencies and administrators that engage in transmission project planning, siting, approval and permitting;
  - Establish grant and loan programs aimed at enhancing electric infrastructure, reliability, and security (LIFT America Sections 31101, 31201); and
  - Increase funding for the Energy Storage program and Smart Grid Research and Development program in the DOE’s Office of Electricity Delivery.
- **Invest in natural infrastructure**, including improving climate resilience through natural defenses;
  - Address public lands maintenance backlog by establishing a public lands maintenance fund, create a guaranteed source of funding for projects that expand outdoor recreation opportunities, and connect veterans with employment opportunities in public lands maintenance;
  - Reestablish federal flood protection standards that apply to all federal infrastructure spending;
  - Increase funding for FEMA’s Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program; and
  - Establish a new revolving loan fund and grant program for climate resilient infrastructure across the country with an emphasis on natural solutions such as restoring wetlands, dunes and native forests.
- **Deliver broadband to rural communities and fill urban gaps;**
  - Increase funding to deploy secure and resilient broadband; and
  - Restore the ability of local governments to regulate deployment of small cells in order to meet the needs of their communities.

**Pillar 4: Jumpstart Domestic Manufacturing**

**Reinvestment and retool industry to build more of the products, materials, technologies of the future here—all while providing more pathways into good family-supporting jobs and ensuring strong, secure clean technology supply chains.**

- **Capitalize an industrial bank or revolving loan fund** to provide loans to manufacturers for producing clean energy, transportation, and infrastructure technology and energy efficient products and for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from manufacturing facilities;
  - Ensure criteria for domestic, high-quality job creation - and targeted investment in impacted communities.
- **Fund urgent manufacturing conversion and retooling:**

- Fund Section 1603 grants in lieu of tax credits for clean technology manufacturing and/or industrial retooling or conversion;
- Fund Section 132 Manufacturing Conversion/Industrial Retooling Grants - to shift or retool facilities to produce clean vehicles or components;
  - Prioritize conversion of existing plants to produce critical components and clean technologies;
  - Emphasize priority investments in plants recently closed or at risk of closure, or in deindustrialized or under-invested communities; and
  - Retain and enhance mechanisms encouraging collaboration with local and state investments, workforce development measures and related economic development tools,
- Enhance grant programs for small- and medium-sized manufacturers to deploy industrial efficiency, repowering, and emissions reduction technology and processes.
- **Expand and update the Advanced Technology Vehicle Manufacturing (ATVM) Loan Program** to, at a minimum, cover medium- and heavy-duty clean vehicles and component manufacture, and manufacture of related electric charging/hydrogen fueling equipment and to prioritize economically critical technologies.
- **Renew and expand clean energy and clean energy manufacturing tax credits:**
  - Renew and enhancing funding for the Section 48C Manufacturing Tax Credit Program, which provides an investment tax credit to reequip, expand, or establish domestic clean energy, transportation, and grid technology manufacturing facilities;
  - Increase the Section 48 investment tax credit for combined heat and power (CHP) and clarify that waste heat to power is also eligible for this credit;
  - Adapt the Section 45M technology production tax credit to fund domestic production (or manufacturer purchase) of strategic clean energy/vehicle component technologies, including batteries, solar cells, and wind components;
  - Extend major clean energy, clean vehicles, energy storage, industrial efficiency and other tax credits to spur demand; and
  - Improve key tax credits to enhance their domestic economic and equity impacts.
- **Greatly increase U.S. funding for technical assistance and RD&D** to levels commensurate with competitor nations; and focus on support to industrial transformation, and filling gaps in critical clean technology and materials supply chains:
  - Launch a National Institutes of Manufacturing to coordinate manufacturing initiatives across the federal government;
  - Establish a new U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Industrial Transformation, and execute a program of technology development, demonstration, and deployment in energy-intensive industry commensurate with achieving net zero emissions by 2050;
  - Increase funding across DOE programs, including the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE), Office of Science, and ARPA-E;

- Increase funding for and extend the scope of existing DOE Title17 Innovative Energy Loan Guarantee—and Tribal Loan Guarantee—programs to support first-in-class and subsequent deployment of innovative industrial technologies that modernize energy-intensive manufacturing and reduce industrial emissions;
- Establish a permanent jobs, labor, and energy workforce program in the Office of the Secretary of Energy; and
- Ramp up technical assistance and funding at DOE to greatly enhance deployment of CHP, WHP, smart manufacturing, and other existing and near-term energy and materials efficiency technologies and processes in industrial facilities.
- **Use public investment and incentives to boost a strong, clean, and fair manufacturing economy in America**
  - Boost direct federal—and state and municipal—procurement to spur demand for clean, fair, safe, and domestically manufactured clean technology, such as:
    - Enhance government purchases of clean government fleets and net-zero government buildings, innovative community resilience, and disaster response technology; and
    - Spur innovative domestic energy and grid technology adoption by federal- and municipal-owned energy systems, for example Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and Power Marketing Administrations (PMAs) , and ensure these systems in turn facilitate industrial efficiency and repowering within their jurisdictions.
  - Implement a program like Clean Cars for America that spurs vehicle turnover and the purchase of highly efficient and electric cars, SUVs and trucks;
    - Ensure these programs incentivize domestically manufactured vehicles and technology and provide options for all income levels.

### **Pillar 5: Provide Critical Long-Term Support and Protections for Workers**

**Rebuild and expand the social safety net, including pensions, healthcare, and retirement security, and ensuring and enforcing worker and community health and safety.**

- **Guarantee retirement security through a federally-funded cash infusion to shore up multi-employer pension plans;**
- **Ensure workers’ rights and representation:**
  - Remove policy barriers to organizing:
    - H.R. 2474/S. 1306, the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act;
    - H.R. 3463, the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act;
    - H.R. 1154, the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act;
  - Ensure access to unions for EPA staff and other federal employees; and
  - Discourage misclassification and misuse of temporary labor.
- **Improve existing social safety net programs:**

- Permanently modify laws to allow immediate access to unemployment insurance, increase benefit size, expand work-sharing eligibility, allow for extensions, and expand coverage to self-employed and gig workers;
- Ensure mandatory paid two weeks sick leave and family leave;
- Provide mental health support for workers providing critical public services; and
- Provide adequate supplies and safe workplaces to:
  - Ensure OSHA has enough budget to hold employers accountable for workplace health and safety, focusing on staffing for timely and effective enforcement; and
  - Require the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) to evaluate OSHA’s current use of maximum penalties where warranted.
- **Modernize our federal health and safety laws and ensure adequate policy enforcement:**
  - Require OSHA to expedite its review and update of the existing emergency response and preparedness standards, including an assessment of the durability of the revised standards under future conditions; and
  - Amend Section 3 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSH Act) to extend federal protections to public sector workers in all federal OSHA states and territories.
- **Improve training, retraining and career pathways:**
  - Increase funding for the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) Worker Education and Training Program and DOL Susan Harwood Training Grants program;
  - Incentivize community workforce agreements, targeted hire requirements, and similar measures focused on increasing employment of disadvantaged and underrepresented workers and communities in manufacturing and infrastructure projects;
  - Boost investment in registered apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship-integrated programs with community-based “wrap around” services to maximize retention of disadvantaged and underrepresented workers; and
  - Require the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to work with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Office of Personnel Management to develop a coordinated and publicly accessible national surveillance system for occupational health and safety that includes education for all workers on their right to refuse dangerous work.

**Pillar 6: Prioritize investments in those communities most in need**

**Prioritize those hit first and worst by the crisis as well as low-income communities, communities of color, and deindustrialized communities.**

- **Make targeted and equitable reinvestment in impacted communities a priority for any grant and loan programs established;**
- **Reclaim abandoned coal mines and spur economic development opportunities in hard hit communities in need of an economic boost:**
  - Expedite the use of existing funds in the AML fund to reclaim abandoned mines and stimulate economic development on reclaimed land (RECLAIM Act - H.R. 2156).
- **Protect disabled coal miners with black lung who are disproportionately vulnerable, including:**
  - Extending the excise tax on coal companies for 10 years (HR 3876 / S 3172) and improving the functioning of the program (S. 2205); and
  - Providing extra funding for federally-supported black lung clinics to ensure they are well-staffed, can acquire extra space in order to ensure social distancing, and have adequate cleaning supplies.
- **Increase funding for key agencies and programs that focus on investing in hard-hit communities, redeveloping industrial sites, spurring economic development, and remediating environmental degradation, including:**
  - Increase federal funding for the Economic Development Administration;
  - Increase funding for the Appalachian Regional Commission;
  - Increase federal funding for waste cleanup programs such as EPA’s superfund and Brownfield programs; and
  - Increase funding to additional critical EPA programs, including EPA’s
    - Small and Disadvantaged Communities Drinking Water Grant Program;
    - State and Tribal Assistance Grants;
    - Environmental Justice Program; and
    - Lead Risk Reduction Program.

**Conclusion:**

Investment in a forward-looking recovery is critical to assure American families, workers, businesses—and the markets—that we will rebuild a fair and resilient economy. The ancillary benefits of those investments will pay dividends for decades.

We call upon Congress to enact these recommendations.