



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

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

It is critical we ensure the safety of workers on the job in the face of COVID-19, whether they are nurses on the frontlines, workers in warehouses, utility workers keeping the lights on across the country, or manufacturing workers building essential products. Congress has taken significant steps to protect workers, and must continue to prioritize the most vulnerable; safeguard working peoples' jobs, homes, and livelihoods; shore up essential public services; and protect the health and safety of frontline workers.

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 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;
- Installing workers on boards, providing equity ownership stakes, other measures to ensure continued alignment with the public interest with regard to major rescue packages;
- Protect workers and their benefits in bankruptcy proceedings; and
- Require companies to 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.**

- **Protect the health and safety of healthcare, emergency, critical infrastructure, manufacturing and all essential workers:**
  - Require the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue, enforce, and train employers and workers in the provisions of an emergency temporary standard to protect all frontline workers from COVID-19, including:
    - Ensuring immediate company-specific OSHA consultations about the precautions companies should take as they reopen, ramp up, or change over production to make PPE, medical devices, and necessary supplies;
  - Require the Mine Safety and Health Administration to issue, enforce, and train employers and workers in the provisions of an emergency standard to protect coal miners from COVID-19;
  - Allow workers to self-quarantine if they are concerned about exposure to the virus, and protect them from termination if they are quarantined; and
  - Ensure workers who provide direct patient care, emergency services, or are otherwise in hazardous working environments are compensated with appropriate pay.
- **Ensure the manufacture and supply of critical equipment immediately and secure the U.S. supply chain, jobs and workers to meet ongoing need:**

- Ensure the federal government fully utilizes the Defense Production Act (DPA), to manufacture and distribute the equipment, supplies, and procedures necessary to protect the public and all essential workers, including:
  - Passing the Medical Supply Chain Emergency Act (Schatz-Murphy) to ensure sufficient immediate supply, ensuring requisite funding for DPA;
  - Task FEMA’s National Response Coordination Center to, in coordination with DOD and HHS, immediately assess the need for equipment, supplies, and procedures, identify and distribute existing reserves, and work directly with manufacturers and suppliers to purchase and transparently, equitably, and effectively allocate and distribute these items;
  - Provide firm purchase and delivery guarantees and, where necessary, provide additional funding to manufacturers to purchase equipment, retool, or hire additional workers to manufacture PPE or critical medical devices or their components, or to ramp up sterilization facilities while remaining in full compliance with environmental protections and worker and community health and safety;
- Require the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response at HHS to do an annual assessment and to replenish masks, medicine, and medical equipment in the Strategic National Stockpile, in line with ongoing review of domestic supply chain and stockpile needs for critical goods.
- **Protect communities and workers’ jobs, wages, and benefits:**
  - Extend UI benefit eligibility for the duration of COVID-19-caused economic downturn and expand UI work-sharing eligibility to avoid layoffs;
  - Ensure workers in all sectors—and at companies of all sizes—have access to paid sick leave for themselves and family members, closing the loophole from CARES to cover companies with over 500 employees;
  - Ensure a workers’ leave for COVID-19 is separate from their existing leave, and that they are eligible at any time they are employed;
  - Protect workers’ healthcare and pension plans and coverage of missed contributions due to missed work or layoffs;
  - Guarantee retirement security through a federally-funded cash infusion to shore up multi-employer pension plans, using the House-passed Butch-Lewis Act and/or direct fiscal aid to plans (\$10 billion);
  - Issue a moratorium on all evictions, foreclosures, and utility shut-offs;
  - Create a grant program to assist low-income households with water and sewer services (\$5 billion);
  - Provide direct additional, unrestricted, funding to state and local government facing severe budget shortfalls (\$200 billion);
  - Ensure that any taxpayer is eligible to receive stimulus benefits; and

- Protect workers and their benefits in bankruptcy proceedings, including the Protecting Employees and Retirees in Business Bankruptcies Act of 2018 (S. 2518, 115<sup>th</sup> Congress).
- **Ensure critical services for community health and safety and support for education:**
  - Provide additional emergency relief grant funding for K-12 (\$200 billion);
  - Require response plans for students with special needs, those in special facilities, as well as those who do not speak English as their first language;
  - Ensure protections are in place for custodial staff tasked with decontaminating facilities impacted by COVID-19;
  - Compensate educational professionals working additional hours to ensure children and parents are prepared and safe;
  - Provide \$10 billion for Community Health Centers to address the physical, environmental, and mental health impacts and disparities of this current crisis and to take a leadership role in preventing, adapting to, and recovering from future crises;
  - Fund the “Ready Reserve Corps” to respond to public health emergencies and build community resilience (\$5 billion); and
  - Prohibit water shut-offs and establish mandatory safe water reconnections during crisis.

**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;
- **Rebuild 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 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:
    - 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 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 healthcare workers have clear guidance on 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, which would** 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.
- BGA's full list of infrastructure priorities can be found [here](#).

#### **Pillar 4: Jumpstart Domestic Manufacturing**

**Reinvest in 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, as well as 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





- 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 by passing the following legislation:
    - 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.