



April 9, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Hoyer,

As a coalition of some of the nation's largest labor unions and environmental organizations, collectively representing millions of members and supporters, the BlueGreen Alliance thanks you for your efforts to date to advance critical relief for the COVID-19 crisis. As you work towards the next legislative package, we collectively urge you to prioritize workers and families and the make strategic investments necessary for a sustained economic recovery.

Priority one must remain addressing working people and families' immediate needs.

Working people on the frontlines are facing numerous threats and challenges—we must ensure the safety of workers on the job in the face of COVID-19, whether they are healthcare workers providing critical care, workers in warehouses, utility workers ensuring critical infrastructure is functioning, or manufacturing workers building essential products. Congress has taken significant steps but we support your efforts to do more to ensure that the health and safety of frontline workers is protected. Congress must continue to prioritize the most vulnerable; safeguard working peoples' jobs, homes, and livelihoods; and shore up essential public services.

To this end, the next package must:

- 1. 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 personal protective equipment (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.

2. 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 employ the procedures necessary to protect the public and all essential workers:
 - Pass the Medical Supply Chain Emergency Act to ensure sufficient immediate supply, as well as ensuring requisite funding for the implementation of DPA;
 - Task the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) National Response Coordination Center—in coordination with the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)— to immediately assess the need; 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 facilities, 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; and
- 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.

3. Protect communities and workers' jobs, wages, and benefits:

- Extend unemployment insurance (UI) benefit eligibility for the duration of the COVID-19-caused economic downturn and expand UI work-sharing eligibility to avoid layoffs;
- Ensure workers, including contract 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 governments facing severe budget shortfalls (\$200 billion);
- Ensure 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, 115th Congress).

4. 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 additional funding for Community Health Centers to address the physical, environmental, and mental health impacts and disparities of the current crisis and to take a leadership role in preventing, adapting to, and recovering from future crises (\$10 billion);

- 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.

At the same time, we must start thinking long-term about how we provide ongoing security for American workers and families and put America back to work. Millions of people are already out of work and millions more will be dislocated. This crisis has demonstrated that our economy already wasn’t working for too many Americans. As we make investments to get the economy back on track, everything we do must be aimed at building a stronger, fairer, and cleaner economy that creates and sustains the good, high-paying jobs of the future and makes our communities and workers more resilient to crises.

Once we are past the immediate emergency and economic rebuilding efforts begin in earnest, we look forward to working with you to advance proactive investments that:

- **Invest in our infrastructure.** We support building on the Moving Forward Framework, including by upgrading our water systems; modernizing our schools, hospitals, buildings, and transit systems; delivering broadband to rural communities; eliminating community health hazards; investing in natural infrastructure, and modernizing our grid. Coronavirus has made it too clear the negative impact crumbling infrastructure has on public health—too many Americans are without basic necessities like access to clean water. These investments can provide a much needed jolt to our economy while delivering good jobs and public health and climate benefits to communities.
- **Rebuild the public sector and services to prepare for and respond to crises.** The crisis we are facing has put a spotlight on the critical importance of investing in workers on the front lines of fighting this virus—such as first responders, teachers, healthcare workers, and home care and childcare workers—and keeping our communities functioning. We need to rebuild the capacity of the public sector, the health care system, public health agencies, education, and community-based resources to prepare for and respond to disasters like COVID-19 today, and to keep our communities safe and stable for the future.
- **Support and retool America’s manufacturing sector,** with a major reinvestment in fortifying and transforming heavy industry and retooling to build more of the products, materials, and technologies of the future here—all while providing more pathways into good family-supporting jobs and strong secure domestic supply chains. We cannot cede American manufacturing jobs to our global competitors or leave our economy and communities vulnerable because we failed to be forward-thinking about boosting the sector for the short and long term.

- **Provide critical long term support and protections for workers.** Workers and communities cannot deal with crises alone, whether they are disastrous hurricanes or fires or global pandemics. We must rebuild and expand the social safety net—including pensions, healthcare, and retirement security—and ensure and enforce worker and community health and safety. This includes shoring up multiemployer pension and annuity plans millions of Americans rely on for their retirement benefits. These policies will help ensure working families are better equipped to handle the next financial, health, or other crisis.
- **Prioritize equitable rebuilding and investments in those communities most in need,** including those hit first and worst by the crisis as well as low-income communities, communities of color, deindustrialized communities, and disabled coal miners with black lung. The response to this crisis should deliver a healthier and more equitable future.

Making investments now in a forward-looking sustainable recovery is critical to ensuring workers come out of this crisis with security for the future. Investment in America’s basic infrastructure, social systems, and manufacturing sector can and must build a stronger, cleaner, and more inclusive economy for every American. The ancillary benefits of those investments will pay dividends for decades. Repairing our broken infrastructure systems will also reduce pollution and the emissions driving climate change and improve public health for generations to come.

We urge you to pass an economic stimulus package that shows up in the pockets of those who need it, creates quality, family-sustaining jobs, and lays a foundation for American prosperity for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Federation of Teachers
 BlueGreen Alliance
 Environmental Defense Fund
 International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers
 League of Conservation Voters
 National Wildlife Federation
 Natural Resources Defense Council
 Service Employees International Union

Sierra Club
 United Steelworkers Union
 Union of Concerned Scientists
 Utility Workers Union of America