



April 2, 2020

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

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

The Honorable Jim Clyburn
Majority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Ben Ray Luján
Assistant Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Chair, Democratic Caucus
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Katherine Clark
Vice Chair, Democratic Caucus
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Sent Electronically

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, Majority Whip Clyburn, Assistant Speaker Luján, Chairman Jeffries, and Vice Chairwoman Clark,

Last month, the New Democrat Coalition put forward a comprehensive package of policy recommendations and priorities for inclusion in Congress's coronavirus (COVID-19) response and economic recovery packages. On behalf of the Members of the New Democrat Coalition, we thank you for including a significant majority of our Coalition's recommendations in the last package, H.R. 748, the Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. As Congress continues its vital work in responding to the coronavirus pandemic to secure the health, well-being, and economic security of Americans, we write to raise several priorities for consideration in any upcoming coronavirus response packages.

Overall, we urge House and Committee leadership to focus our continued response on targeted, timely, and temporary policies that address the immediate and pressing issues unique to the coronavirus pandemic and its economic impacts, and that are linked in duration to this crisis and our nation's recovery from it. Our efforts must focus on solutions related to this crisis to prevent the delay of urgent follow-on support and assistance. We believe the many other worthy priorities that deserve attention should be considered separately under the normal legislative process.

In crafting the next package, we will continue to help advocate for the priorities of our members and the NDC recommendations not included in previous packages, as well as to make fixes to programs from previous packages currently in implementation. We also support many policies already in discussion, including funding to ensure upcoming elections are held in a safe and secure manner, measures to ensure adequate access to personal protective equipment and other vital medical equipment, increased support for state and local governments for both coronavirus costs and lost revenue, as well as targeted infrastructure investments to put people to work and lay the foundation for America's long-term economic success.

Having said that, we believe three core priorities must be addressed by Congress to most effectively support our nation's recovery.

- 1. Automatic Stabilizers:** The precipitous nature of both the spread of coronavirus and the economic contraction that followed, including a significant spike in initial jobless claims, made clear the need for the rapid deployment of federal assistance and stabilization efforts. To ensure American workers, families, and businesses get the help they need when they need it, we believe the next response package should build automatic stabilizers into the direct payments, public assistance programs, support for impacted businesses, and other stabilization funds authorized by previous coronavirus response bills that would be triggered if negative conditions persist or worsen. Employers and workers need a sense of predictability. A one-off payment is useful in meeting immediate financial needs, but for the many American workers and businesses uncertain of their circumstances and whether or not the crisis will persist three to six months from now, it will do little to restore demand and stimulate our economy.

For example, if much of the economy remains shutdown beyond April into May, the direct payments authorized in the CARES Act should be triggered for another round of disbursements and trigger subsequently if similar conditions are extended beyond May. Similarly, a set of duration-based or economic marker-based triggers should be put in place to deploy additional federal funding for the SBA disaster and payroll loans and grants, the Treasury-Federal Reserve joint emergency lending facilities, and direct assistance and flexible emergency funds for states, localities, tribes, territories, and health care providers.

Including automatic stabilizers would enable the rapid disbursement of assistance and funds where needed most without any additional Congressional action or administration roadblocks.

- 2. National Recovery Strategy:** Once the immediate threat of the coronavirus crisis is cleared and American workers, students, and businesses prepare to return to business as usual, it is critical we pursue a coordinated strategy that balances coronavirus mitigation and widespread stimulus to recover our economy. Congress must develop an evidence- and science- based national standard to ensure we are safely unwinding certain existing mitigation measures, including social distancing. To achieve this, we believe there are three key components to a recovery strategy that Congress must prioritize.

First, to ensure we are able to track every new case of COVID-19 as we loosen existing mitigation measures, we must roll out a national testing and contact tracing system backed up by a secure supply chain, adequate funding, and appropriate privacy safeguards. Second, to understand the true spread of the disease in our communities, we must continue to prioritize research and the purchase of serological, or anti-body, tests and direct the CDC to conduct widespread serological testing to identify how much of a community has already been exposed and developed immunity to COVID-19. This information is a vital part of our efforts to keep Americans safe, and can help inform how a community responds or re-engages its workforce. And third, we must continue to prioritize funding for treatments, vaccines, and the resiliency of our health care system to combat coronavirus directly, and to monitor and prepare for future potential health threats.

Congress must ensure the appropriate legislative framework is in place and that the administration is authorized to carry out the measures necessary to continue monitoring coronavirus in our community and preventing a resurgent second wave. While the immediate threat of COVID-19 must be dealt with swiftly, Congress must learn from this moment and fully fund our public health agencies, including the CDC, FDA, and NIH, and enact policies to ensure the administration implements a global health strategy with robust surveillance and preparedness measures to manage this and future potential health threats.

- 3. Health Care Coverage Affordability:** We support providing COVID-19 testing and, for those who test positive, treatment at no cost to all patients. Following the unprecedented response of both public and private health insurance providers expanding coronavirus-related benefits and coverage for many patients, Congress must take steps to ensure plans remain affordable in the next plan year. Congress should create a catastrophic risk mitigation program for ACA individual and small business market plans, private group insurance, Medicare, Medicaid, VA insurance, and TRICARE to off-set the unexpected costs of this pandemic to plans that provided expanded coverage and benefits related to COVID-19. Doing so will meet the needs of the emergency at hand and prevent premium increases in plan year 2021.

In closing, we respectfully request that, to the greatest extent practicable, Leadership and Committee Chairs return to regular order despite the challenges of our current remote work. Committees should seek to carry out an inclusive, bipartisan process as we craft the next round of responses, utilizing the technology solutions identified by the House Committee on Administration to hold virtual legislative hearings and meetings as soon as possible. Now more than ever, Congress must conduct public oversight and legislative discussions to ensure the coronavirus recovery packages already signed into law are implemented quickly, thoroughly, and appropriately by this administration, and to ensure future packages are fully responsive to the needs in Members' communities.

We thank you for your consideration of these priorities and look forward to continuing to work with you as Congress diligently crafts the next coronavirus mitigation and recovery legislation. Our first duty must be to end the pandemic, provide direct support to impacted individuals, health care providers, health workers and first responders, and communities on the front lines,

and to then enact policies to return to normal so that our public health and our economy both thrive.

Sincerely,



Rep. Derek Kilmer
Chair
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Suzan DelBene
Vice Chair
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Ann McLane Kuster
Vice Chair
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Scott Peters
Vice Chair
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Terri Sewell
Vice Chair
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Pete Aguilar
Whip
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Chrissy Houlahan
Freshman Leadership Representative
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Mikie Sherrill
Freshman Whip
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Jim Himes
Chair Emeritus
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Ami Bera
Leadership Member
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Kathleen Rice
Leadership Member
New Democrat Coalition

Cc: Chairs of the Standing Committees of the U.S. House of Representatives