

THE 99%

PENNSYLVANIA



MEMO

TO: The United States Congressional Delegation from Pennsylvania

FROM: Concerned Pennsylvania Organizations

DATE: Wednesday, November 25, 2020

RE: The need for immediate action on pandemic relief for Pennsylvania

We are entering a year-end holiday season unlike any we've previously experienced, with COVID-19 cases rising and more than 250,000 Americans lost to the virus. Millions of people across the country are struggling to put food on the table, including many Pennsylvanians. The latest Census Household Pulse data reveals that as we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving, more than 1.3 million Pennsylvania households are reporting that they sometimes or often don't have enough to eat, including 338,000 households with children. The data also shows that nearly half a million households in the state – one in five renters – are behind on rental payments.

As bad as things are, they would be far worse without the added help for families and the economy that the federal government approved early in the pandemic. But that assistance is running out, as many critical protections are expiring in the week following Christmas, including:

- Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation, which provides for 13 weeks of extra unemployment insurance (UI);
- Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, which extends support to gig workers and the self-employed, who would not ordinarily qualify for UI benefits;
- the moratorium on evictions imposed by the Centers for Diseases Control (CDC);
- student loan forbearance; and
- CARES Act grants to state & local governments.

[A report released in mid-November by The Century Foundation](#) finds that 12 million people will lose federal benefits the day after Christmas if Congress does not pass extensions for key unemployment programs.

The national halt on evictions issued by the CDC expires on December 31st, and the lack of federal emergency rental assistance means that millions of people who are behind on their rent will continue to fall behind, putting them at risk of eviction or housing instability.

Earlier this fall, the Senate considered a relief package with more money for schools, more money for childcare, and a boost in jobless benefits. But it was missing important provisions, such as food assistance for families having trouble affording groceries, rental assistance to help families stay in their homes, and help for states and localities to avoid cuts and layoffs that would take money out of local economies.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and President Donald Trump have both called on Congress to provide more COVID relief during the lame-duck session. And Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell has said, "Too little support would lead to a weak recovery, creating unnecessary hardship for households and businesses."

We urge you to advocate for a robust and comprehensive pandemic relief package when the House and Senate return to session after the Thanksgiving holiday. We strongly encourage you to insist that any relief legislation include:

- extending the previously enacted COVID protections that are set to expire at the end of the year;
- authorizing adequate unemployment insurance benefits for people who have lost their jobs;
- increasing SNAP benefits by 15% to help families put food on the table;
- providing emergency rental assistance to help families stay in their homes;
- offering childcare assistance so that parents have the safe, affordable childcare they need to be able to return to work when it's safe to do so;
- establishing emergency grants to help low-income households that were left out of previous packages or need additional help; and
- delivering additional aid to state and local governments to prevent more job layoffs and cuts in critical services.

We appreciate your advocacy for these provisions as coronavirus relief negotiations resume in the weeks ahead. By helping more people buy food, pay the rent, and meet other basic needs, a new relief package would also benefit Pennsylvania and the nation as a whole by pumping money into the economy to support local businesses, prevent further job losses, and strengthen the recovery.

Thank you.

Signing organizations:

The 99% Pennsylvania campaign

AccessMatters

Allies for Children

American Association of University Women - PA

Americans for Democratic Action, Southeastern PA Chapter
Asian Americans United
Asian Pacific Islander Political Alliance
Berks Stands Up
Better PA
Bucks County Women's Advocacy Coalition
Capital Region Stands Up
Casa San Jose
Coalition for Labor Engagement and Accountable Revenues (CLEAR)
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Coalition for Low Income Pennsylvanians
Coalition for National Infrastructure Bank
Community Advocates of Montgomery County
Creative Play Day School
Education Voters of Pennsylvania
enVision New Possibilities
Erie County United
Every Mother is a Working Mother Network
First Up: Champions for Early Education
The Food Trust
Global Women's Strike
Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger
Green Party of Pennsylvania
Hunger Free PA - PA Food Banks
Indivisible Lower Merion
Indivisible Upper Darby
Indivisible We Rise West Central PA
Indivisible: Narbeth and Beyond
Just Harvest

Keystone Progress
Keystone Research Center
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in PA
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium
Northeast Philadelphia Parent Support Group
Partnership for Better Health
Payday Men's Network
PennFuture
Pennsylvania Budget & Policy Center
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Pennsylvania Health Access Network
Pennsylvania Southeast Conference, UCC
Pennsylvania Waiting List Campaign
Philadelphia Neighborhood Networks
Philadelphia Parent Support Group
Philadelphia Unemployment Project
Planned Parenthood Pennsylvania Advocates
Public Citizens for Children and Youth
The Returning Citizens Voter Movement
SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania
SEIU Local 668
Tuesdays with Toomey Philadelphia
Turn PA Blue
Unitarian Universalist Justice PA
Vision for Equality
West Philadelphia Parent Support Group
Women of Color in the Global Women's Strike