

May 12, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20505

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20505

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20505

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy,

We, the undersigned 62 organizations and 771 young people, are dedicated to the health, safety, and wellbeing of young people in this country, especially those most severely impacted by COVID-19. With the United States now the epicenter of the global pandemic, Congress must pass further relief for young people immediately. Despite the important provisions and emergency funding included in the CARES Act, this legislation still falls short of what is needed to respond to this historic national crisis.

Young people who rely on life-saving medication, identify as LGBTQ+, are of color, are currently enrolled in school (secondary or higher education), live on college campuses, are survivors of sexual assault, are living with HIV, come from mixed status immigrant families, are pregnant or parenting, were declared “dependents” on their parents’ most recent taxes, obtain health insurance through a parents’ employment, or who are juggling multiple part-time or gig economy jobs - are falling through the cracks of the country’s public health and economic response to COVID-19.

We urge you to ensure that the next phase of emergency relief legislation does the following to slow the epidemic, save lives, and prevent devastating harm to young people:

1) Ensure help reaches all people in this country, no matter their immigration status or where they work, including those who have or have a family member with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). This would expand and guarantee qualification to stimulus checks for those living with mixed status families, including DACA recipients, temporary visa holders, and beneficiaries of Temporary Protected Status. The virus does not care about immigration status or tax filing status. Gaps in relief are endangering young immigrants and their families, many of which are putting their lives in danger as essential workers.

2) Remove dependent distinction for recovery rebate eligibility to include young people. Congress needs to act quickly to close the gap that disqualifies thousands of young people, ages 17-23, for a stimulus check and support. By carving out young people who have been claimed “dependents” on their parents’ previous taxes, thousands of young people, many who have been

displaced from their college housing, have fallen through the cracks of the economic response. These young people are facing the same financial barriers as the rest of the population, as they are enrolled in school and tend to work multiple part-time or gig economy jobs that have now reduced hours or ended entirely. They are still expected to find housing, pay tuition and other bills, and maintain their livelihood just like everyone else. Being a “dependent” for their parents’ tax purposes does not mean these young people are not living full lives and contributing to the economy.

3) Quickly move as many people as possible from crowded shelters, prisons, detention centers, and jails to safe housing. Cases of COVID-19 have been reported in higher concentrations within prisons and detention centers across the country. Decarcerating as many people as possible in custody and detention, including immigration detention centers, will ensure that all people who might be exposed are tested and treated in a hospital setting, not the infirmary or medical unit.

4) Expand unemployment, paid leave, and nutrition benefits for all those who need them and extend the time frame. Fill gaps in eligibility and increase benefits so all people have basic needs met and can stay home as needed. Congressional leaders need to ensure that SNAP work requirements are suspended for all public programs, including student work requirements. While the CARES Act does allow for some flexibility regarding participation and application requirements, the federal agencies that administer public benefit programs were not given the option to eliminate the work requirements other than for certain categories under SNAP. Congress should not leave this action to federal agencies or require states to request waivers.

5) Expand healthcare access, regardless of how people obtain their insurance. Unnecessary and harmful Hyde Amendment language should not be included in any new COVID-19 related spending packages. Expanding healthcare access includes making telehealth and telemedicine options widely available to all who need it, with a particular focus on marginalized and rural communities. Congress should also pass measures like the Affordability is Access Act, which makes sure that over-the-counter contraceptives are covered without insurance companies requiring a prescription.

6) Do more for student borrowers by cancelling crushing student debt. While we support the interim measures to defer payment on student debt through September 30, 2020, a failure to cancel all student debt will create more harm in the long run, especially for people with low incomes and young people of color. Broad cancellation of student debt will provide direct relief to millions of borrowers, bring peace of mind to struggling families, and will actually help stimulate the economy by creating long-term resources for young people to invest in their future.

7) Ensure schools continue to comply with civil rights and school safety obligations, including providing academic and safety accommodations and services to students who report sexual assault and harassment - including cyber harassment - and other discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education should also suspend the proposed Title IX rulemaking process during this emergency period.

8) Ensuring the Department of Education and Universities are appropriately freezing student fees, tuition payments, refunding room and board costs for those who are unable to pay due to

COVID-19. Students who withdraw from college due to hardship (i.e. COVID-19) should not have to pay back the school for exorbitant fees and loans.

9) Require the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention to collect and report demographic data on COVID-19 testing practices, cases, deaths, and severe illness/complications from COVID-19. Appoint a task force or select committee of researchers and experts in health equity and social determinants of health to develop targeted strategies to address health disparities and barriers to COVID-19 testing and treatment for communities of color. Congress must prioritize Black and brown communities and those most marginalized in this public health crisis.

10) Do not abandon the necessity of nondiscrimination measures during this pandemic. All COVID-19 response legislation must include language prohibiting discrimination by recipients of federal funds on any basis other than need or eligibility, such as (but not limited to) age, disability, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity, and pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions), race, color, national origin, immigration status, or religion.

11) Institute a guaranteed nationwide cancellation of rents and home mortgage payments through the duration of the coronavirus pandemic. Congress needs to be proactive and ensure full payment forgiveness, with no accumulation of debt for renters or homeowners, and no negative impact on their credit rating or rental history.

12) Require the Department of Treasury to ensure the United States Postal Service is given the funds to be able to continue to operate effectively, especially as the agency is on the brink of shutting down completely. Postal workers deliver life-saving medicine to people of all ages, are delivering much-needed stimulus checks to those most in need, and in states which allow voting by mail, they are integral in helping democracy function. Congress must ensure the USPS is able to properly function and provide the necessary services it provides.

13) Support the child care system, which has been hit hard by this crisis, negatively impacting young people with children and young people in the child care workforce. Specifically, Congress should provide at least \$50 billion in total funding dedicated to child care to offer immediate relief to providers, educators, and families during this crisis.

During this global pandemic, Congress must act swiftly to ensure young people do not fall further through the cracks. We urge you to prioritize the health, safety, and well-being of young people in the next phase of emergency relief legislation.

Sincerely,
Advocates for Youth
URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity

Endorsement of this sign-on letter is an indication of solidarity within our movement and a recognition of the urgency of these policies. Endorsement does not necessarily mean that each organization has expertise in or are actively working towards each priority or policy listed.

Advocating Opportunity
African American Health Alliance
AIDS Alabama
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants,
Children, Youth & Families
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
AMPLIFY GA
Athlete Ally
Black AIDS Institute
Black and Pink
California LGBTQ Health and Human
Services Network
Center for Disability Rights
Cobalt Advocates
Colorado Organization for Latina
Opportunity and Reproductive Rights
Equality North Carolina
Feminist Women's Health Center
Forward Together Action
Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network
(GSA Network)
Generation Progress
Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health
In Our Own Voice: National Black
Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
Ipas
Juvenile Justice Coalition
LaGender Inc.
Lambda Legal
Lilith Fund
NARAL Pro-Choice America
NASTAD
National Abortion Federation
National Asian Pacific American Women's
Forum (NAPAWF)
National Birth Equity Collaborative
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Institute for Reproductive Health
(NIRH)
National Latina Institute for Reproductive
Justice
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center

Not Without Black Women
Ohio Organizing Collaborative
Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive
Choice
People For the American Way
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Positive Women's Network-USA
Reframe Health and Justice
RJ4NGP
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change
SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive
Justice Collective
Southern AIDS Coalition
SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW!, inc.
The Alabama Women's Center
The Trevor Project
The Well Project
Treatment Action Group
True Colors United
TruEvolution
We Testify
Woodhull Freedom Foundation
Young Invincibles