

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

In addition to presenting a massive public health challenge, the Coronavirus will cause a severe economic shock, the immediacy and magnitude of which we may never have seen. Over the course of just one week, most of America went from business-as-usual to a virtual shutdown. Workers have seen their hours cut or eliminated entirely, and millions of American families are assessing how they will weather a potentially long-lasting economic paralysis.

We must provide direct cash support to the American workers and families who need it most – to help them purchase essentials; pay the rent, mortgage, and bills; and otherwise weather the coming weeks and months.

We believe it is essential to provide assistance directly and quickly. Regardless of how fast Congress acts, there will be a lag between action and support arriving to workers and businesses, and every day we delay action will be a delay in support arriving. Now is not the time for a “wait-and-see” mentality.

We propose sending payments quarterly and directly to American families. The first payment would be \$2,000 per American to account for the immediacy of the shock, with subsequent payments stepping down over time and the duration of payments tied to subsequent economic triggers. Payments will only completely shut off after unemployment drops to less than 0.5 percentage points above the levels that prevailed before the Coronavirus-induced economic damage. Attached to this letter is a more detailed outline of our proposal.

This moment demands bold action. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act is a vital first step to delivering immediate assistance to workers and families, providing testing, paid sick leave, support for state unemployment divisions, food assistance, and health care support for states through Medicaid. In addition to passing this critical legislation, we must provide additional support to the hardest-hit individuals, small businesses, as well as state and local governments. That includes efforts by the Finance Committee to strengthen our Unemployment Compensation system through expanded benefits and increased federal financing, as well as broadened eligibility to include gig workers, contractors, tipped workers, and others who are currently left out.

During a crisis of this magnitude, it is imperative we put forward a response commensurate with the challenge we face. We urge you to consider this proposal and look forward to working with you to pass it as soon as possible.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Senator Michael F. Bennet

Senator Sherrod Brown

Senator Cory A. Booker

Senator Angus S. King, Jr.

Senator Christopher S. Murphy

Senator Brian Schatz

Enclosure: Appendix: Coronavirus Economic Support Payment

Appendix: Coronavirus Economic Support Payments

Following is an outline of a proposal for economic support payments to support families and workers through the COVID-19 state of emergency and to provide continued assistance as the economy returns to health:

- Initial Payment (to cover first 3.5 months, mid-March through June 2020):
 - \$2,000 payment per:
 - Adult not on Social Security
 - Child or non-child dependent
 - Social Security, VA benefit, SSI recipients (added to their earliest possible benefit check)
 - Eligibility/Administration:
 - Workers who file for Tax Year 2019
 - Non-filers can file a simple 1040 separately
 - Seniors on Social Security will receive payment from the Social Security Administration (SSA); Veterans from the Veterans Administration (VA); Supplemental Security Information (SSI) recipients from SSA
 - Pay SNAP/TANF recipients via electronic benefit transfer (EBT), where federal-state data sharing is possible
 - Phased out for higher-income taxpayers, with a phase-out rate of 5% of the aggregate credit amount

- Second Potential Payment (July – September 2020):
 - Additional payment of \$1,500
 - Triggers:
 - Public health emergency continues into July certified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services AND an Economic Turmoil Determination by Treasury Secretary
 - OR unemployment is at least 1 percentage point higher in June than three month moving average in December 2019 — February 2020, as reported in July
 - Half payment of \$750 per person if June unemployment is 0.5 percentage point above December 2019 — February 2020 average
 - Eligibility: Same as above

- Additional Quarterly Payments (October-December 2020 and beyond):
 - Additional payment of \$1,000 per quarter
 - Trigger:
 - Economic turmoil designation by Treasury Secretary AND Unemployment rate in last month of previous quarter (i.e. September, as reported in October) is up at least 1 percentage point vs. December 2019 — February 2020 average
 - Half payment (\$500) if unemployment rate remains at least 0.5 percentage points above December 2019 — February 2020
 - Eligibility: Same as above