



Washington, D.C.
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February 8, 2021

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 Leader Hoyer:

We write to urge the House of Representatives to ensure that a key priority of President Biden's American Rescue Plan, increasing the insufficient \$600 of direct cash assistance in the December relief bill to \$2,000, is included in the new House COVID-19 relief bill. President Biden, the two newly elected Democratic Senators from Georgia, and Democrats across the country made this promise to the American people. In order for this promise to be fulfilled, workers and families who received these survival checks in previous bills must not be excluded from additional aid through misguided attempts to further "target" the aid. The American people agree, and overwhelmingly believe Congress should prioritize sending checks out as quickly as possible over worrying about someone who does not need the assistance receiving it.

To be clear, further "targeting" would narrow the universe of people who would receive survival checks would represent a broken promise to those individuals and families left out of the bill. This assistance, as in previous bills, will likely use income data from 2019 to determine eligibility, but millions are in worse economic circumstances now, following nearly a full year of net job losses and dramatic wage decreases, felt most acutely by women and people of color. This means that lowering the income thresholds for this aid would exclude large numbers of people who are in desperate need of relief. To recognize this economic reality, relief legislation should prioritize inclusivity and simply put money in people's pockets to weather this crisis. Instead of restricting survival checks, the House should ensure more people receive this aid, including ITIN holders and mixed status families, and not discriminating based on immigration status.

Direct cash assistance crucially fills gaps in our other social safety net programs that can be the difference between a food insecurity or food on the table. New research has found that not even a quarter of those who lost work during the pandemic have

received unemployment assistance. Additionally, it has been well documented that women bear a larger share of unpaid care work, and those women being forced out of the workforce during the pandemic face difficulty qualifying for unemployment benefits and many are not captured in unemployment data. While we can and should work to eliminate the gaps in our unemployment system, millions are suffering now and robust, inclusive direct cash assistance is the surest way to get them the support they need as swiftly as possible.

In addition to being effective and necessary, direct cash assistance is incredibly popular across the ideological spectrum. Democrats now have an opportunity, and responsibility, to pass one of the effective and popular relief measures that wins the support of 78 percent of Americans, including 90 percent of Democrats and 64 percent of Republicans. Failing to fulfill this promise would not only have disastrous material consequences for workers and the economy, but would be out of line with prevailing sentiment. It is therefore both a policy and a political imperative that Democrats do not buy into false narratives of deservedness, and instead ensure the House relief bill includes survival checks that are more inclusive, not less, than the checks distributed under President Trump. Leaders Pelosi and Hoyer, as this bill is shaped from the House, it is incumbent upon you to lead and say “no” to efforts to water down President Biden’s American Rescue Plan.

The country is currently mired in a once-in-a-century pandemic and recession, and thankfully the President’s \$1.9 trillion dollar rescue package represents an opportunity to reduce the pain and hardship while setting us on a path to recovery. Advocates across the ideological spectrum have called for building upon past relief efforts by increasing the direct cash assistance to \$2,000 for every working class person and dependent - a call that Democrats, including President Biden, have embraced. House Democrats must rise to this occasion and fulfill their promises on direct cash assistance.

Signed,

Indivisible

UltraViolet Action

Sunrise Movement

Bend the Arc Jewish Action

Young Invincibles

Justice Democrats

Social Security Works

Center for Popular Democracy Action
The Coalition of Labor Union Women
Insight Center for Community Economic Development
Tax March
Health Care Voter
Faithful America
Liberation in a Generation
American Family Voices
Our Revolution
Opportunity Wisconsin
Common Defense
Alliance for Quality Education
Communications Workers of America
Groundwork Action
League of Women Voters of the United States
Journey for Justice Alliance
United We Dream
Take on Wall Street
Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research
Center for Popular Democracy
Working Families Party
Honest Arizona
51 for 51
Just Democracy
Marked By COVID