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April 29, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-220, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader Schumer:

We thank you for your leadership in working to address the public health crisis and global pandemic as a result of COVID-19.

The Members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) appreciate your efforts to include many of our policy priorities in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. However, there is still much more needed to strengthen our communities and ease the impact of the pandemic thus far. As Congress negotiates future packages to provide much-needed federal resources, we write to highlight the following proposals to help Black families, businesses, and communities across our nation.

Revitalize the Black community.

- **Make public health emergencies eligible for Major Disaster Declarations under the Stafford Act.**
- **Require moratoriums on consumer and small business credit payments, including car notes, credit cards, personal loans, and small business loans.**
- **Include additional rounds of immediate financial support for individuals and families.**
- **Prohibit waivers from Civil Rights requirements for all recipients of relief funds.**

- **Provide \$10b to state, territory and tribal governments to establish State Emergency Assistance Funds that would provide resources to help those who have not been helped by other emergency assistance efforts to date.**
- **Ensure independent contractors and those who are self-employed have access to worker protections, including paid leave and unemployment insurance.**
- **Provide an additional \$3 billion in Community Service Block Grants**
- **Provide a nationwide moratorium on utility shut offs.**
- **Extend the "above-the-line" or universal charitable deduction for contributions to the end of 2021 (\$300 deduction included for 2020).**
- **Support minority depository institutions (MDIs) by requiring the Federal Reserve to temporarily provide zero percent interest rate loans to MDIs and make grant funding available to MDIs to invest in technology upgrades that will allow their clients' virtual access to critical banking services.**
- **Provide the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) with an additional \$2.9 billion (3 billion requested; \$10 million funded under the CARE Act.)**
- **Reauthorize the State Small Business Credit Initiative and provide \$10 billion.**
- **Provide a rebate for 100 percent of payroll taxes paid by small businesses this year and provide a refund of 200 percent of payroll taxes paid by small businesses in "hot spots;" 50% tax credit provided in CARE Act is not enough.**
- **Provide additional emergency funding, through grants that will specifically support investments in technology, cybersecurity, and resilience by small businesses owned by minorities, women, and veterans.**
- **Provide \$82 billion in rural broadband funding** for the deployment of secure and reliable broadband for needy communities nationwide, spurring much needed economic development for rural communities that have been left behind concerning broadband;
- **Provide relief to Black Farmers by relieving any outstanding indebtedness arising from the settlement of claims successfully brought by African American farmers against the United States Department of Agriculture for discrimination, where the government was found to be at fault.**
- **Expand the definition of a dependent for the Recovery Rebates for individual sections of the CARES Act to include children younger than 19, students 24 and younger, and no age limit for dependents who are disabled.**
- **Prioritize minority press for US government advertising contracts.**
- **Provide \$100 million for the workforce and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to support the United States Postal Service.**

- **Hold corporations accountable** by requiring that any employer that receives government assistance must provide all employees with paid sick days, paid family and medical leave, comprehensive insurance coverage, and strong worker protections and prevent any employer receiving government assistance from providing golden parachutes or exorbitant bonuses to its senior management or chief executive officer.
- **Create additional targeted and immediate grant relief for restaurants, small hotel operators, and other small businesses and nonprofits at risk of closing or bankruptcy in the coming weeks.**
- **Include language ensuring that agricultural small businesses and farms are eligible for Small Business Administration (SBA) loans.**
- **Ensure Cannabis businesses are eligible for SBA relief programs and funds.**
- **Set a 0% interest rate for all SBA loans related to coronavirus.**
- **Eliminate the early payoff penalty on SBA loans related to coronavirus.**
- **Create a federal tax credit for businesses that incur substantially higher costs** for functions essential to responding to coronavirus as the supply chain adjusts to this crisis.
- **Implement support for corn growers** who will be impacted by lower ethanol demand due to the significant drop in automobile gasoline use.
- **Suspend the Trump Administration's retaliatory tariffs** to provide economic relief to Black farmers and manufacturers.
- **Investigate longer-term solutions to address the fact that many insurance policies available to small businesses do not cover damages or business interruption injuries** from infectious disease outbreaks, even in situations where some states have ordered closures.
- **Create a temporary federal tax credit for families who incur additional childcare costs because of circumstances credibly** related to coronavirus (i.e., the parent is a clinician or first responder working overtime, the regular caregiver is compromised, coronavirus-related transportation or logistical barriers to regular childcare, etc.)
- **Increase and expand the child tax credit to offset families' additional expenses.**
- **Prevent credit reporting agencies from using adverse credit events related to coronavirus** in determining a credit score, and from including them in consumers' credit reports.
- Include language expressing the sense of Congress that that EPA needs to prioritize protecting communities from ethylene oxide and to continue their work on the issue while also ensuring medical supply chains can operate adequately.
- Include strong oversight and transparency provisions with common-sense worker and consumer protections that ensure taxpayer funds are being used appropriately.

Ensure quality health care.

- **Provide an additional \$56.1 billion for Community Health Centers, the National Health Service Corps, Teaching Health Centers Graduate Medical Education program.** (\$60.1 billion requested; 4 billion funded under CARE Act);
- **Provide an additional \$46.6 billion to fully fund and reauthorize Community Health Centers and the National Health Service Corp to 2025 with a 10 percent increase each year.** (\$47.7 billion requested; \$310 million provided through FY2020 and \$51.8 million funded between October 1-November 30 under CARE Act);
- **Fully fund CHCs with an additional \$7.08 billion in funding (\$2.8 billion immediately, \$1 billion in emergency funds per year for five years for a total of \$8.4 billion, \$1.32 billion provided in CARE Act);**
- **Congress must provide \$7.6 billion in emergency supplemental funding over the next 6 months for Community Health Centers,** as well as long-term funding for five years of the CHC Fund, to ensure that they receive the resources necessary to meet the needs of our most vulnerable communities during this crisis and beyond.
- **Provide an additional \$3.87 billion to the HRSA grant program to expand access to health care, increase the mental health workforce, and improve access to telemedicine (\$3.9 billion requested; \$29 million funded under the care act).**
- **Support immediate health care coverage for foster youth** and extend Medicaid to 26 for youth who exited foster care to a kinship guardianship;
- **Provide tax credits for doctors, nurses, and other allied health professionals** who come out of retirement to provide much-needed care during the COVID-19 crisis;
- **Provide tax credits for manufacturers of ventilators, masks, and other resources** needed to serve COVID-19 patients and keep health care professionals safe.
- Ensure coverage of treatment for coronavirus without cost-sharing for all Americans.
- Direct relief payments for individuals and dependents, increased access to personal protective equipment (PPE) and coronavirus testing, and additional grants and loans for small businesses, as well as reinsurance policies that will lower premiums while maintaining insurer participation in individual marketplaces.
- Establish a special enrollment period for COVID-19.
- **Provide \$10 million** in the supplemental appropriation for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline in FY20
- **Leverage Medicaid's role and create an enhanced federal Medicaid assistance percentage (FMAP) match** for mental and behavioral health services.
- **Support community mental health funding.**

- **Ensure equity in vaccine and treatment development for the coronavirus**, including babies and pregnant and lactating women.
- **Require the CDC in coordination with HHS to collect and distribute data on racial and ethnic health disparities** related to the coronavirus pandemic.
- **Congress must ensure that comprehensive racial data on COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and fatalities is collected by the Department of Health and Human Services and made public.** Congress can do this by including the **Equitable Data Collection and Disclosure Act on COVID-19 Act** in any upcoming funding packages.
- **Provide expanded funding for Diagnostic Testing for COVID-19 via national laboratories.**
- **Ensure that there is an available and accessible funding mechanism to provide emergency support to non-profit health providers with more than 500 employees**, such as some community health centers.

Protect our students and our educational institutions.

- **Provide an additional \$1.9 billion in emergency funding to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority Serving Institutions (\$3 billion requested; \$1.1 billion funded under CARE Act.)**
- **Provide additional funds for Subpart 1, Part D of Title II of Every *Student Succeeds Act* for McKinney-Vento grant to states that specifically support their identified homeless students;**
- **Provide an additional \$2.9 billion in additional funds for Subpart 2 of Part A of Title I of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* for financial assistance to high-poverty school districts and schools (\$4 billion requested, \$1.1 billion provided in CARE Act);**
- **Provide resources for student housing**, as many college students living in dormitories need immediate funds to find alternative accommodation.
- **Allocate resources for colleges that stay open for students in need**, such as foster youth, international students, and low-income students.
- **Provide an additional \$250 million in funding for Head Start (\$1 billion requested; \$750 million funded under CARE Act.)**
- **Provide an additional \$500 million in childcare funding to reduce the strain on families (\$4 billion requested; \$3.5 billion funded under CARE Act.)**
- **Grant total student loan debt cancellation and immediate relief, which** would help stimulate the economy when we need it the most.
- **Include robust funding and support for mental health services**, including services for veterans, students (K-12 and higher ed) and teachers, and suicide prevention.

- **Contain a provision allowing college student mental health and medical professionals to practice across state lines for six months**, allowing students to continue to receive care and counseling despite college and university campus closure
- **Include provisions addressing youth suicide.**
- **\$3 million supplemental appropriations for the National Child Traumatic Stress Network in FY20**
- Allow deferral of student loan payments with no interest for the duration of this crisis and a period after that as students and families get back on their feet.
- Provide targeted student debt relief for borrowers who are currently making payments on their loans.
- Increase IDEA funding to support schools as they face significant challenges and increased current and future costs associated with providing education to students with disabilities.
- Provide additional funding for school districts and higher education institutions to help cover technology costs (e.g., purchasing laptops and hotspots) so that students can participate in distance learning.

Protect incarcerated individuals.

- **Prioritize releasing incarcerated individuals** in prisons, jails, and detention centers through clemency, commutations, and compassionate release. BOP discretion to release low-risk offenders to home confinement provided in the CARE Act is insufficient.
- **Allow immediate temporary release to home confinement** of individuals who are a low-risk threat to the community, but to whom COVID-19 is a high-risk threat, which should automatically include (1) pregnant women, (2) adults over the age of 55, and (3) those with severe medical conditions, but could extend to those who are near to completing their sentence, low-risk offenders, and those who have not begun their sentence unless they pose a risk of serious injury to a reasonably identifiable person. BOP discretion to release low-risk offenders to home confinement provided in the CARE Act is insufficient.
- **Release all juveniles who have committed a non-violent crime.**
- **Provide \$4 billion for Second Chance Grants**, with priority given to community-based nonprofit organizations, to ensure individuals released from custody have the resources needed to reintegrate into their communities successfully.
- **Agree that solitary confinement is not medical care and establish a Medical Emergency Plan with designated housing areas**, including the tracking all suspected cases of COVID-19 and available hospital beds and necessary equipment, the hiring of medical professionals capable of responding to COVID-19 inside facilities, and the development of a plan to transfer those who need intensive care to hospitals.
- **Waive Section 1905(a)(A) of the Social Security Act (the inmate exclusion provision) on an emergency basis until at least six months after the COVID-19 crisis is over.** This provision prohibits the use of Medicaid funding (and other federal funds) for medical care provided to "inmates of a public institution." Moreover, this provision would apply to individuals who are incarcerated but have not been

convicted of a crime (pre-trial). Removing this provision would provide significant relief to states and counties whose budgets are dramatically impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak and other health issues.

- **Grant states limited new flexibility to restart benefits for Medicaid-eligible incarcerated individuals 30 days before release.** If States are permitted to restart Medicaid benefits before release from custody, facilities and communities will be able to provide more effective care, treatment, and coordination for COVID-19 and other health conditions while supporting a more effective transition to community-based care.
- **Repeal or waive current federal prohibitions and oppose more bans on individuals with criminal records from receiving federally funded COVID-19 benefits and supports, including housing, employment, and nutrition assistance.** Some state and local jurisdictions and agencies limit access to need-based supports such as SNAP, TANF, and housing assistance for those with certain criminal convictions. Such conviction bans on access to federally supported benefits and resources should not occur during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Youth and young adults who are incarcerated or detained should have regular access, at no cost, to their families, friends, and attorneys through video conferencing, email, and full-access postage mail.**
- **In the event of emergency lockdown/quarantine, there should not be a criminal punishment or penalties for minor offenses, breaching emergency quarantine protocols, failing to disclose COVID-19 symptoms, or for potentially exposing others to the virus, acts of survival, such as taking supplies or resources needed to survive the COVID-19 pandemic.** Instead, citations or desk-tickets should be issued in place of arrest so that people can return home, balancing the need for arrest with the overwhelming public safety concerns presented by the coronavirus. This action will help prevent increasing the incarcerated population, especially during the pandemic.
- Congress should **provide federal cash assistance to individuals who are released from custody during the pandemic.** Individuals impacted by the justice system, and their families need direct cash assistance to help them with lost wages, access to food, housing, and other basic needs.
- **Provide funding to federal, state, and local corrections officials and other stakeholders to support transition planning for youth and adults before release from federal, state, and local prisons, jail, detention, and secure confinement facilities to ensure connection to critical community-based services upon discharge.** Transition planning should facilitate warm-hand off upon release to community-based services that address urgent health issues, such COVID-19 and the need for Medication Assisted Treatment and other drug treatment and harm reduction services to help prevent drug overdose upon release, as well as nutrition support, housing, and other reentry supports during the COVID-19 epidemic.
- Congress should **provide funding to ensure that youth and adults who are released from custody have access to safe and appropriate housing for the duration of the COVID-19 epidemic.**

Maintain access to the ballot.

- **Restore Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965** to counter voter suppression tactics in the 2020 election cycle.

- **Prohibit the postponement or cancellation of any election and require every state to implement a vote-by-mail system as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days before the November 2020 General Election date.**
- **Establish a National Vote-By-Mail system for all remaining primaries and the general election** including prepaid postage, a postmark deadline of Election Day, the ability for third parties to collect and return sealed ballots, and the prompt notification of and ability to cure any signature matching issues before the balloting deadline.
- Restore voting rights to incarcerated people and those who are recently released and ensure that they have access to vote-by-mail without having to request a ballot online.
- **\$3.6 billion** for state election integrity efforts
- **\$4 billion in federal funding** made available immediately to states, counties, and municipalities.
- **A federal requirement that all states institute a minimum early voting period of 14 days, including at least one Saturday and one Sunday.**
- **A federal requirement that all states offer no-excuse mail-in absentee voting** to every eligible voter.
- **An additional \$4 million to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission** for increased administration and additional state support.

Preserve housing and combat homelessness.

- **Provide an additional \$87.5 million for Fair Housing Enforcement**, to ensure that fair housing organizations and state and local agencies have enough resources to deal with an expected surge in fair housing complaints, including pandemic-related financial scams that target protected classes. (\$290 million requested; \$200 million funding for HUD Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity; \$2.5 million for related HUD Programs under CARE ACT.)
- **Require forbearance for mortgages on rental properties** to the extent that owners of rental properties continue to have trouble servicing their debt during the suspension of rental and payment and evictions, even with the rental assistance fund. CARE Act provisions providing a temporary moratorium on eviction filings are limited to federal loans (FHA, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, etc.) and provide direct relief to renters.
- **Provide an additional \$8 billion for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) under this heading (\$10 billion requested; \$2 billion funded under CARE Act.)**
- **Provide an additional \$290 million for Servicer Coordinators to assist elderly households** under the Service Coordinator Grant program, which supports seniors and people with disabilities who are living in HUD-assisted housing and will need additional funding to ensure medical and other services are provided to elderly residents who are the most vulnerable to the health impacts of the virus. (\$300 million requested; \$10 million funded under the CARE Act.)
- **Provide an additional \$3 billion in additional funds for the McKinney-Vento Emergency Solutions Grant** program to provide formula grants to states, large cities, and counties to fund rapid

re-housing, prevention programs, and emergency shelters. (\$5 billion requested; \$2 billion provided under the CARE Act.)

- **Provide \$1 billion in emergency homeless assistance** to enable state and local governments to finance housing and health-related services, including by paying for emergency use of hotels and motels, for the many people who are experiencing homelessness, and as a result, are at higher risk of contracting the disease.
- **Provide \$35 billion to establish a housing assistance fund across all 50 states, DC, and territories.** The fund, which would be managed by state housing finance authorities, would help struggling homeowners through mortgage payment assistance, principal reduction, utility payment assistance, and reinstatement of mortgage following a period of forbearance. In addition to these permissible activities, for those states that have housing assistance programs established under the Hardest Hit Fund (a TARP Program), activities under Hardest Hit are also allowable. Additionally, the funding can reimburse states for costs expended for any of the prior actions.
- **Suspend the Work and Community Service Requirements in Federal Housing Programs and the ban on formerly incarcerated.**

Safeguard the Social Safety Net.

- **Increase the reach of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):**
 - **Increase SNAP benefits** during this public health emergency similar to the 13.6% increase in SNAP benefits under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
 - **Provide additional SNAP administrative funds to States** for the remainder of the fiscal year;
 - **Expand CR-SNAP** to increase program eligibility, similar to D-SNAP;
 - **Expand SNAP eligibility to college students in need;**
 - **Waive all SNAP work requirements** under section 6 of the *Food and Nutrition Act* of 2008
 - **Authorize the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to waive the hot food's requirement under SNAP |**
 - **Explicitly authorize USDA to expand the online SNAP pilot nationwide;**
 - **Provide funding to support the delivery of food to homebound SNAP participants**, including seniors and persons with disabilities, by nonprofit and faith-based organizations;
 - **Temporarily suspend restrictions on the statutory outreach requirements** in the 2014 Farm Bill and provide additional funds for outreach and application assistance for nonprofit organizations;
 - **Block USDA from finalizing or implementing rules related to Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents, Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility, and the Standard Utility Allowance**

- **Block implementation of the final public charge rule;**
- **Waive the restriction on formerly incarcerated individuals receiving SNAP;**
- **Provide additional money for the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program** (*formally FINI*) for online delivery of fresh fruits and vegetables purchased with SNAP benefits;
- **Provide at least a twelve-month moratorium on enforcement of work requirements for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).**
- **Waive the restriction on formerly incarcerated individuals receiving TANF;**
- **Waive the restriction on formerly incarcerated individuals receiving HUD housing assistance;**
- **Provide exemptions to use Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards at restaurants in food deserts;**
- **Ensure that federal stimulus supports, including child support programs and unemployment benefits, do not count as assets and negatively impact eligibility for federal assistance programs.**
- **Ensure every American worker has access to the Federal Medical Leave Act, paid sick leave, and paid family leave.**

Keep people moving.

- **Provide additional protections for transportation workers**, from airline and airport workers, custodians, air traffic controllers, and TSA agents, to public transit workers, including hazard pay, protective equipment, and OSHA standards as introduced in the Take Responsibility for Workers and Families Act.

Fund Science, Research, and Development.

- **Provide an additional \$25 million to NSF through FY2021(Pg. 20) (\$100 million requested; \$75 million funded under CARE Act.)**
- **Provide \$34 million to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Homeland Security research program** to support their ongoing response work to COVID-19;
- **Provide \$20 million in funding to support ongoing intramural research activities at EPA** in all six research programs that may be disrupted by COVID-19;
- **Provide \$10 million for new intramural EPA research** on virus exposure pathways and the environmental, public health, and climate impacts of socio-economic slowdown;
- **Provide \$10 million for ongoing extramural research** activities previously funded through the Science to Achieve Results (STAR) grants that may be disrupted by COVID-19; and
- **Provide \$10 million for new STAR grants to fund extramural research** on virus exposure pathways and the environmental, public health, and climate impacts of a socio-economic slowdown.

- **Provide \$34 million to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Homeland Security research program** to support their ongoing response work to COVID-19;
- **Provide \$20 million in funding to support ongoing intramural research activities at EPA** in all six research programs that may be disrupted by COVID-19;
- **Provide \$10 million for new intramural EPA research** on virus exposure pathways and the environmental, public health, and climate impacts of socio-economic slowdown;
- **Provide \$10 million for ongoing extramural research** activities previously funded through the Science to Achieve Results (STAR) grants that may be disrupted by COVID-19; and
- **Provide \$10 million for new STAR grants to fund extramural research** on virus exposure pathways and the environmental, public health, and climate impacts of a socio-economic slowdown.

Preserve foreign ops funding.

- **Ensure the State Department is coordinating with the Caribbean and Western Hemisphere** governments to enhance their COVID-19 capabilities.
- **Provide \$12b for addressing the impact of COVID around the world, including:**
 - \$4b for Global Health Pandemic Response;
 - \$5b for Emergency Economic Relief and Humanitarian Assistance;
 - \$3b for ongoing frontline operational response from the US government.
- **Provide \$1.5b specifically to address the impact of COVID in Africa, including health systems strengthening, humanitarian response, economic assistance, social support and debt relief.**
- **Restore funding to the World Health Organization.**

Aiding Community Organizations and Entities.

- **Establish direct federal support for localities with populations under 500,000.**
- **Allocate additional funding for public health infrastructure** and workforce.
- **Create a grant or loan program that would provide additional mortgage loan forbearance and relief for Black churches and the nonprofit sector.**
- **Congress should support robust funding for faith institutions and the nonprofit sector**, including 501(c)4, 501(c)5 and 501(c)6 organizations, and nonprofits with over 500 employees. Furthermore, Congress should ensure that adequate funds are appropriated for this expansion of eligibility
- **Increase funding for personal protective equipment (PPE) for health care workers, first responders, and essential workers such as pharmacists, grocery store employees, election workers, and childcare providers.**

- Include language requiring and directing improved coordination, centralization, and transparency from the Administration in the PPE supply chain.
- Provide direct funding, as well as necessary medical equipment and resources, for hospitals, community health centers, and health systems.
- Provide additional EAC/HAVA funding to support local election authorities, and ensure it can continue to be used to pay for:
 - More staff for processing mailed ballots.
 - To support equipment, such as ballot folders, printers, and tabulators.
 - Sanitizing supplies (hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, gloves, etc.)
 - Renting larger sites for polling places.
 - More election judges
- Increase federal support for nonprofits affected by the coronavirus, including those with over 500 employees.
- Authorize the Secretary of HHS to award grants to states to support activities that strengthen their home- and community-based services (HCBS) benefit, which could be used to facilitate hazard pay to home care workers.
- Ensure support is available for homeless and struggling veterans who may be quarantined or facing additional hardship due to coronavirus.
- Ease the process for governments to obtain .gov domain names, providing the sites themselves with greater security and offering greater assurances to residents that they are looking at a government website.

Sincerely,



Rep. Karen Bass
Chair, Congressional Black Caucus

cc.
Majority Whip James Clyburn
House Democratic Caucus Chair Hakeem Jeffries
House Agriculture Committee
House Committee on Appropriations
House Armed Services Committee
House Committee on the Budget
Education & Labor Committee
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House Committee on Financial Services
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Committee on Homeland Security
House Committee on the Judiciary
Natural Resources Committee
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Committee on Small Business
The House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Ways & Means Committee