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26TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-0926

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April 23, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker:

Thank you for your leadership and dedication to protecting the American people during this public health crisis. I am proud of the work that the Congress has done thus far to help keep our families healthy and economy afloat, but it is clear much more needs to be done.

Since the onset of this pandemic, I have held numerous telephone town halls, web conferences, and individual conversations with community leaders in my district, and my office has received thousands of emails and calls from concerned constituents impacted by this virus. I would like to highlight a number of issues of particular importance to Florida's 26<sup>th</sup> district that I urge you to consider when crafting the next COVID-19 response package.

**Healthcare:**

- *Testing Infrastructure:* Include funding needed to conduct organized nationwide testing of all symptomatic persons and their contacts.
- *Contact Tracing:* Include funding for each state to establish a contact tracing workforce to test and quarantine contacts of positive COVID cases.
- *Quarantine Funding:* Include funding to isolate positive cases to avoid new emergences of familial clusters. This could include utilizing hotels that are being underutilized where patients can be quarantined comfortably.
- *Bolstering the Healthcare Workforce:* Include legislation I'm introducing to help institutions of higher education (IHEs) establish and expand accelerated nursing credentialing programs, giving applicants with backgrounds in healthcare, including physicians trained in foreign institutions, access to a rapid credentialing program to be involved in the healthcare response.
- *Preserve and Strengthen Medicaid:* Do not change the Medicaid Maintenance of Effort provisions included in the *Families First Coronavirus* package. Extend the increased Medicaid FMAP benefit through not just the duration of the public health emergency, but as long as the economy is in recession. Include the provisions in the *Taking Responsibility for All Families* bill to incentivize Medicaid expansion.
- *Coverage for Treatment of COVID-19:* Include coverage for treatment of COVID-19 for all insured plans and for uninsured patients. This includes any vaccine or outpatient therapeutic needed to treat this disease.

- *Community Health Centers*: Include robust funding increases for community health centers, which play a vital role in treating underserved communities.
- *Mobile Testing Labs*: Include funding to establish mobile testing labs, which will allow health professionals administering tests to go directly into neighborhoods and hard-to-reach communities and test all symptomatic cases and their contacts.

#### **Labor:**

- *Paid Family and Sick Leave*: Remove the exemption for employers with over 500 employees, requiring them to provide paid family and sick leave.
- *Unemployment Insurance*: Extend unemployment insurance benefits for the duration of this pandemic. Include funding for states to quickly build up their UI system administrative and technological capacity to ensure the key elements of UI and expanded eligibility are used to the maximum effect.
- *Hazard pay for essential workers*: Provide hazard pay for health care workers and essential workers such as grocery store workers, truck drivers, postal workers, and others.
- *Expanded OSHA regulations*: Require expanded, informative OSHA regulations for health care workers and other essential workers.

#### **Small Business:**

- *Paycheck Protection Program*: Extend eligibility and funding for the program past the June 30 date for affected businesses. Relax restrictions requiring small businesses to spend the total loan over the first eight weeks. Remove barriers for sole proprietorship eligibility. Add stricter provisions on PPP money that direct banks to lend to all applicants, not only those with a pre-existing relationship, and to prioritize smaller businesses.
- *Nonprofit 501(c)(3)*: Waive affiliation rules for nonprofits, expanding eligibility to nonprofits with multiple locations with each individually under 500 employees but aggregated may no longer be eligible.

#### **Fishing Industry:**

- *PPP*: Rather than paying mortgage interest or rent for a traditional brick and mortar shop, fishermen pay month marina fees for either dock rent or ramp access. These costs range between \$250 to over \$1500 per month. Marina costs should be considered forgivable expenses within the PPP.
- *Appropriations*: Provide significantly more funding for the fishing industry. The \$300 million included in the CARES Act was woefully inadequate.

#### **Agriculture and Nutrition:**

- *School Meals*: Provide additional funding for school nutrition programs. Many schools rely on revenue from the share of students who pay for their meals at school. However, with schools closed and this revenue stream cut off, school districts are finding the existing USDA reimbursement structure insufficient.
- *Appropriations for Farms*: Provide additional funding for the agricultural industry, and specifically the specialty crop industry, as Florida's seasonal crop losses through mid-April are expected to surpass \$525 million. Additionally, the CFAP payment caps must be lifted.

- *Appropriations for SNAP*: Provide additional funding for the SNAP program.

### **Education:**

- *Expanded Learning*: Include significant increases to Title I and IDEA funding for school districts to utilize for expanded learning opportunities to make up for lost learning due to COVID. This includes helping cover expenses and salaries for increased summer learning or earlier start dates for the 2021 school year.
- *Student Loan Forgiveness*: Provide \$10,000 in student loan forgiveness across the board, as well as an additional \$10,000 in student loan forgiveness for doctors, nurses, and teachers responding to this pandemic.
- *E-Rate*: Increase flexibility of the FCC's E-Rate program to alleviate home access gaps and provide internet to students, libraries, school districts during national emergencies, including COVID-19. Moreover, provide additional funding to the FCC's E-Rate and Lifeline programs to ensure sufficient home-learning capabilities for all students.
- *State and Local Budgets*: Include significant funding to cover lost revenues for state and local budgets, to prevent discretionary budget cuts to education and healthcare. Extend tax credits from *Families First* to public entities to create parity in providing paid sick and family leave.

### **Individual Assistance:**

- *Direct Payments*: Increase the upper limit on direct payments from \$75,000 with incremental decreases to \$99,000 to instead \$100,000 with incremental decreases to \$125,000. Increase age limit on dependent children definition from 17 to 24. Continue direct payments monthly for the duration of the recession.
- *ITIN*: Utilize the ITIN for eligibility for direct payments, ensuring all taxpaying adults have access to these payments.

### **Housing:**

- *Moratorium on Foreclosures/Evictions*: Extend the housing assistance benefits from the CARES Act to non-federally backed properties. Include provisions for affordable repayment options so renters and homeowners aren't required to pay back all deferred payments in large lump sums. Consider relief funding options for landlords.

### **Voting Rights and Election Security:**

- *Voting Options*: Require states to provide extended early in-person voting, as well as no-excuse vote-by-mail options, for all federal elections.
- *Additional funding*: Provide additional funding to states, without matching requirements, to implement early and mail-in voting provisions in 2020.

### **State and Local Governments:**

- *Appropriations*: Provide significantly more funding for state and local governments to fight the pandemic.

### **Immigration:**

- *Farmworkers*: Provide funding to give farmworkers additional employee benefits, including sick and family leave, hazard pay, access to childcare, physical protection as

outlined by CDC guidelines, and food assistance.

**Flood Insurance:**

- *Risk Rating 2.0*: Delay the implementation of Risk Rating 2.0 a further 18 months, at least. My constituents are struggling with the economic impact of this pandemic and a sudden increase in flood insurance premiums will render housing costs unaffordable.

Sincerely,



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Debbie Mucarsel-Powell  
Member of Congress

CC:

The Honorable Nita Lowey, Chair, House Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Chair, House Energy and Commerce Committee  
The Honorable Nydia Velázquez, Chair, House Small Business Committee  
The Honorable Richard Neal, Chair, House Ways and Means Committee  
The Honorable Bobby Scott, Chair, House Education and Labor Committee  
The Honorable Maxine Waters, Chair, House Committee on Financial Services  
The Honorable Collin Peterson, Chair, House Agriculture Committee  
The Honorable Eliot Engel, Chair, House Foreign Affairs Committee  
The Honorable Zoe Lofgren, Chair, House Administration Committee  
The Honorable Bennie Thompson, Chair, House Homeland Security Committee