

October 1, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, and Secretary Mnuchin:

We are glad that bipartisan negotiations have resumed around a major package of COVID-19 relief. We urge you to provide assistance on a scale that fits the enormous challenges facing struggling families, workers, and businesses all across America.

Specifically, we write to underscore the importance of protecting comprehensive health insurance as part of any final package. In the months since COVID-19 hit our shores, more workers have lost employer-sponsored insurance than during the worst full year of the Great Recession. Any COVID-19 relief package must safeguard health coverage, which is more important now than ever before as our country endures the worst public-health crisis and economic downturn in living memory.

The updated HEROES Act now under consideration in the House takes many important and positive steps to safeguard both Medicaid and private coverage, including increased federal funding for state Medicaid programs, maximum premium tax credits for unemployment-insurance recipients, a federal special enrollment period, and funding for consumer assistance.

Yet the updated bill falls short on coverage in one critical way. We urge you to include the COBRA subsidies that were in the original HEROES Act, so that laid-off workers have the option to affordably continue the coverage they receive through employers. Employers of all sizes continue to report massive layoffs across industries, and it is clear that laid off workers will have immediate coverage needs. Many of these workers may prefer to stay on their current plans and maintain their provider networks and prescription drug formularies.

We urge you to include all of these coverage measures in any forthcoming agreement.

The health and financial security of millions of Americans now depends on whether you protect their health insurance. Economic recovery requires beating the COVID-19 pandemic, which, in turn, requires avoiding major losses in health insurance coverage. Please do not fall short in protecting comprehensive health insurance during the country's greatest moment of need.

Sincerely,

AFL-CIO

Alliance for Retired Americans

Alliance to Fight for Health Care

American College of Physicians

American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees

America's Health Insurance Plans

American Benefits Council

BlueCross BlueShield Association

Communications Workers of America
Culinary Workers Local 226
Families USA
Federation of American Hospitals
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Joiners of America
NAACP
National Coordinating Committee for Multiemployer Plans
National Council of Urban Indian Health
National Education Association
National Health Council
National Partnership for Women and Families
Pacific Business Group on Health
Small Business Majority
United Brotherhood of Carpenters
UNITE HERE
United Mine Workers of America
United States of Care
United Steelworkers