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Sean Patrick Maloney
U.S. House of Representatives
18th District, New York

March 19, 2020

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

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Democratic Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

In the wake of the unprecedented public health crisis caused by COVID-19, we have acted together to pass two emergency funding packages for health care response efforts and initial economic aid. As we draft a third, broad-ranging stimulus package, I want to make sure we provide relief that reaches my Hudson Valley friends and neighbors as well as the most vulnerable in our country.

Attached please find my priorities for the forthcoming emergency legislation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sean Patrick Maloney".

Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress



Leave No One Behind: Covid-19 Federal Response

Providing the necessary funding and
supplies for states to respond to COVID-19.

March 19, 2020

Submitted by:

Congressman Sean Patrick Maloney, NY-18

Contact: Molly Carey
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Summary

We are facing a global pandemic that does not recognize nationality, political party or any lines of difference. We must pass a broad bill providing all of the necessary funding and supplies for states. But I also am urging leadership in the House of Representatives to leave no one behind. Emergency relief must reach every neighborhood because we are all in this together.

This week, I will join Representative Joseph P. Kennedy III in introducing the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act of 2020. This legislation would provide direct-cash assistance targeted at lower- and middle-income Americans. The legislation would guarantee \$4,000 in annual direct cash payments to adults earning less than \$100,000 each year as well as \$2,000 per child for families within the same income bracket. Those earning above \$100,000 would receive \$2,000 and \$1,000 for each child. In addition, for those earning below \$100,000, payments would continue after the first year as quarterly-installments until the unemployment rate falls below 5.5% for two consecutive quarters.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act would make meaningful investments in two critical safety net programs that are more essential today than ever before: unemployment compensation and public health insurance. Specifically, the bill would eliminate the one-week waiting period imposed on unemployment compensation recipients in most states, ensuring immediate relief. In addition, the legislation would extend unemployment compensation by 13 weeks while increasing payments by \$50 each week. Lastly, the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act would increase the Medicaid Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP), the rate at which states are reimbursed by the Federal Government for their Medicaid expenditures

Beyond this legislation, I am working to include many priorities in the forthcoming, third emergency relief package. The priorities listed below are based on feedback and calls for help my office has received from stakeholders and families across the Hudson Valley. We are here to help. Please continue to contact my office if you need direct assistance.

Leave No One Behind: Covid-19 Federal Response

I. Frontline Health Care Workers and Health Systems

First and foremost, the frontline of medicine must have greater capacity. This critical line of defense remains desperately in need of funding to expand beds as well as access to test kits and supplies to address the emergency and protect staff. It is past time to get community health centers and hospitals the tools they need to combat this public health crisis. Additionally:

- Community health centers (CHCs) serve millions of Americans, particularly people on Medicaid or uninsured. They are the frontline of health for the economically vulnerable. Despite this emergency, CHCs face a federal funding cliff on May 22nd, We must immediately ensure CHCs have access to the federal funds they depend on.
- As of this week, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has authorized an expansion of telehealth services for Medicare enrollees. However, CMS prohibits community health centers from acting as distant sites for telehealth. This prohibition must be lifted for the duration of this public health crisis.
- As smaller health systems including hospitals and CHCs struggle to meet demands from the virus and simultaneously see revenue decrease from postponed and cancelled non-emergency services, funding must be made available to help them maintain payroll and operating expenses.
- Congress should establish a fund similar to the James Zadroga 9/11 fund to ensure first responders are not bearing the cost of working on the COVID-19 response.
- First responders and frontline healthcare workers should have access to a dedicated fund that provides access to vouchers for childcare.

II. Vulnerable Populations

In times of crisis, our most vulnerable citizens are often forgotten. Congress should ensure that funding and resources are dedicated to ensuring that these Americans have access to critical care and assistance in these difficult times.

- Relief packages considered by Congress should ensure that aid is provided to state homelessness agencies to ensure that medical supplies are available to assist people living without long-term shelter.
- HIV community - 60% of the people living with HIV in the United States are age 50 or older – we must allow for waivers on refill limits for maintenance drugs, inclusive of antiretrovirals, for people with chronic conditions like HIV and hepatitis.
 - People with disabilities
 - Information about the virus must be made accessible to people of all abilities. This should include the development of a database specifically for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to track and monitor COVID-19 and related health information.
 - Provide alternative delivery options for people who use SNAP and are unable leave their homes.
 - Explicitly provide unemployment resources for people with disabilities that lose their jobs as a result of social distancing or other pandemic-caused economic disruption.
 - Provide personal protective equipment to residential facilities and group homes for people with disabilities.
 - Require the development and evaluation of clear protocols to ensure quality of care for people with I/DD if they or their caregiver contracts COVID-19 -- both protocols for hospital care and for illness not sick enough to be in a hospital.
- Provide online mental health support as the effects of isolation on people with I/DD and their families can be profound -- including anxiety, depression, and self-harm.
- Train health providers on how to work with people with I/DD when the virus is suspected.

III. Veterans

The men and women who have honorably served in our armed forces will face unique challenges during these trying times. Specifically, many of the nation's veterans rely on the VA for most of their healthcare needs. Congress and the federal government's response must ensure that the VA system is ready to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

- As COVID-19 spreads to the veteran population we must ensure that the VA has the resources it needs to test, process and treat those who have already sacrificed for our country. Any relief package Congress takes up must provide considerable funds to the VA to meet the coming challenges.

IV. Transportation

As New Yorkers and the nation adjust to social distancing, telework and quarantines, many of the critical pieces of our transportation network that people rely on are facing considerable financial strains. Our response package must address these strains to ensure that these key lifelines for our communities continue to function.

- The Department of Transportation, through the Federal Transit Agency and the Federal Railroad Administration, should provide funds to help transit systems and commuter railroads, like MTA and Metro-North, bridge the gap they are facing due to decreased revenues and the simultaneous increase in overhead resulting from increased sanitation efforts.

V. Agriculture

In an already difficult farm economy, the pandemic threatens to further cripple U.S. consumer demand and resulting worker shortages threaten significant disruption of supply chains. Additionally, Hudson Valley farmers are likely to face difficulty in securing the seasonal workers they depend on. We must provide our farms with the support they need to keep feeding us by:

- Emergency SNAP benefits should be expanded and include people who have been both recently laid off and those put on a “zero-hour” work schedule.
- Additionally, the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) must be expanded to provide coverage for relocation, temporary shelter, business protection and disaster-related personal injury expenses as a result of COVID-19.
- Expand SNAP eligibility and expand SNAP use by including restaurants and small businesses to the greatest extent practicable.
- Ensure the Farm Credit system is extending operational loans.
- Provide income stabilization payments to small and beginning farmers selling fresh food to schools and farmers markets who have been impacted by their closures.
- Help farmers facing mental health concerns exacerbated by the current crisis by increasing funding and resources for the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN).
- Retrain out-of-work individuals to fill the farm workforce needs.

VI. Nonprofit Community & Independent Contractors

The nonprofit community employs millions of Americans and provides countless services, many of which are crucial during this public health crisis. Nonprofits must be included in any business continuity relief efforts.

- Encourage Americans to continue contributing to nonprofits by providing a universal charitable deduction for contributions.
- Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) is a program triggered by a Stafford Act “major disaster” declaration that could potentially provide unemployment benefits to individuals who are unemployed as a direct result of disaster (including independent contractors and the self-employed). However, no public health incident has ever been declared as a "major disaster" under the Stafford Act. This must be updated to allow our current public crisis to trigger DUA.

VII. Military Response

The Department of Defense (DOD) has a robust healthcare infrastructure that, while typically employed in times of war and combat, should be tapped to help address domestic needs.

- Military medical specialists should be routed to cities and health systems which will experience high levels of staffing issues as more frontline health care workers become ill.
- The military has existing plans to augment and support the US Postal Service's critical supply chain (important for items like delivering prescriptions and health care items). They should prepare to implement that plan as more postal service employees become infected by COVID-19.
- Funds should be included in the second package to ensure DOD has the resources to execute these operations.

VIII. Education

Schools, colleges and universities around the country have been closed to contain the spread of COVID-19. Students are struggling to continue their studies, get home and maintain some level of normalcy. The government must provide the resources needed to stay on track.

- Nearly 12 million students across the country lack reliable internet access at home. Bridge the "homework gap" by requiring the FCC to provide Wi-Fi hotspots to homes without broadband.
- Increase funding for Impact Aid to address the needs of school districts that have limited funding due to tax-exempt Federal property in their local tax base.
- Congress should infuse funding into state education agencies to provide assistance for distance learning.
- Utilize trained school staff we already have - offer training for elementary and secondary school nurses to become crisis responders for students and families.
- We must provide assistance to college students who are employed through work-study programs. Many of these students use the funds to help pay college expenses as well to assist with their families.
- Provide housing reimbursements for students forced to relocate and allocate funding for students who are forced to make expensive last minute travel plans
- Student Loans - interest on student loans will be waived until further notice. However, lenders still need implementation guidance across all policies seems to be a pattern. Moreover, student loan payments should be fully suspended during the national emergency.

IX. Household Relief

- Waive any waiting period for enrollment in unemployment insurance, Medicare, Medicaid and other federal programs that provide direct assistance to households.
- Housing agencies must put a stay on eviction proceedings and foreclosures. Many large cities have already done so, but the threat of eviction looms for Americans everywhere.
- Halt mortgage and utility payments for low-income families with work disrupted.
- Provide consumer protection for individuals with outstanding contracts for weddings, funerals, and other events that are disrupted.
- Increase funding and flexibility for states to utilize Community Development Block Grants, particularly the Disaster Recovery program.