

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 8, 2020

Dear Colleague:

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic is surging throughout the country and is now causing more pain and havoc than at any time since it began. Last week, an average of almost 200,000 Americans a day were diagnosed with COVID-19 and, tragically, over 2,000 people are now dying every single day.

Further, as a result of the pandemic, we are now experiencing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Over half of our workers are living paycheck to paycheck and one out of four workers are either unemployed or make less than \$20,000 a year. In addition, 92 million Americans are uninsured or under-insured, tens of millions of people face eviction and hunger in America is exploding.

We very much appreciate the hard work that has gone into the current \$908 billion proposal being drafted by a number of Democratic and Republican Senators. But, simply stated, given the horrific extent of the current crisis and the desperation that working families all over this country are experiencing, this proposal does not go anywhere near far enough. In truth, rather than the \$3.4 trillion which we Democrats called for in the HEROES Act, this bill only allocates \$348 billion in new money according to one of the lead Republican negotiators. The remaining \$560 billion are funds transferred from the CARES Act that have not yet been obligated.

Unlike the CARES Act, which we passed in March, this proposal only provides a \$300 supplement for unemployed workers rather than \$600 a week. Further, unlike the \$1,200 direct payment for every working class individual and \$500 for each child, it provides absolutely no direct payment.

Moreover, this proposal does nothing to address the health care crisis impacting tens of millions of Americans who cannot afford medical care and has totally inadequate financial assistance for the most vulnerable.

Further, despite long-time Democratic opposition, it is our understanding that this proposal may provide 100 percent legal immunity to corporations whose irresponsibility has led to the deaths of hundreds of workers. It would continue to provide a get-out-of-jail free card to companies that put the lives of their workers and customers at risk. In fact, the result of this proposal is that, through this liability provision, corporations will be encouraged to avoid implementing the common sense safety standards needed to protect workers and consumers - and make a bad situation worse.

We agree with the AFL-CIO and the 141 organizations who oppose providing this kind of immunity to corporations. According to a letter these groups sent to Senators on December 4th: “Granting immunity would make the country less safe at the exact moment when the COVID-19 pandemic is entering a new, dangerous phase.”

Last March, with unanimous support in Congress, President Trump signed the \$2 trillion CARES Act into law that provided a \$600 a week supplement in unemployment benefits and a \$1,200 direct payment to every working class adult, \$500 per child and significant help for small businesses, states and cities. In October, as part of the negotiating process, the Trump Administration and a bi-partisan coalition in the House supported over \$1.8 trillion in COVID-relief that also included another \$1,200 direct payment.

Given the enormity of the crisis today, it would be unacceptable to take a major step backwards from those previous efforts by passing legislation that only included \$348 billion in new money.

The American people need help and they need help now. We agree with President-elect Biden that a \$1,200 direct payment should be included in this proposal. We also feel strongly that we should not provide immunity to corporations who endanger the health and lives of their employees.

Please join us in demanding that any new COVID-relief proposal includes a \$1,200 direct payment to adults and \$500 to their children. Further, please work with us to make certain that there is no language in this bill to give a liability shield to corporations who threaten the health and safety of workers and customers.

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator