

July 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

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

As you work to craft the next COVID-19 relief package, the undersigned organizations request that it include the Pandemic TANF Assistance Act, so families can access flexible emergency assistance to cover groceries, utility bills, rent, and other basic necessities. As organizations that work with and advocate for families and children who struggle to meet basic needs, including families and children of color being hit hardest by the pandemic, and who face systemic racial or gender disparities, we see or hear about people with little income struggling to make ends meet every day. Even before the pandemic, millions of families and children were struggling to get by. No family or child in the wealthiest nation on earth should live in poverty, but unfortunately, millions do.

Thirty-eight million people – including nearly 12 million children – were living in poverty in 2018, with children of color and women bearing the brunt of those numbers. In 2019, the Federal Reserve found that 40 percent of adults could not cover a \$400 emergency, underscoring the need for greater access to regular cash assistance. Our families live the reality of these inequities— which are exacerbated by systemic racism in policy and decades of disinvestment in communities of color—every day. They face extreme hardships that have only been amplified by this crisis and are getting worse.

According to the [U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey](#), 55 percent of households with a child under the age of 18 had at least one adult lose employment income since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Racial disparities in job and income losses are hitting Black and Latinx families particularly hard, with more than half of these households reporting losses, and few reporting emergency funds that could [last more than three months](#). In addition, [women have borne the majority of job losses since February](#); even with modest gains in June 2020, roughly 1 in 7 Black women and Latinas remained unemployed. [Nearly four in 10 Black and Latinx households with children](#) reported not having enough food to eat, experiencing food insecurity at twice the rate of white households with children. 11.8 million children live in households that [missed a mortgage or a rent payment in May](#), with those numbers even worse for Black and Latinx families, particularly women Native American households are also [facing disproportionately high rates of](#)

[COVID-19](#) and are much more likely to experience poverty and live in areas of concentrated poverty.

To fight back against these growing racial, gender, and economic inequities, Congress must include an emergency grant program to help low-income families and children, especially children of color. The Pandemic TANF Assistance Act (S. 3672), introduced by Sen. Ron Wyden (OR), would do just that. S. 3672 would create a new \$10 billion Coronavirus Emergency Assistance Grant Program that would provide essential funding for states, territories, and tribes to address the unmet needs of families and individuals living at 200 percent or below the federal poverty line (FPL). Including families with children at 200 percent of the FPL is critical to addressing the lack of consistent access to nutritious food, stable housing, healthcare, and other vital resources needed to support their healthy development, but often are not included in other federal programs. Near-poor families with incomes between 100 and 200 percent of the FPL [experience material hardship](#) at nearly the same rate of families living below the poverty line, which underscores the need for the Pandemic TANF Assistance Act. The Coronavirus Emergency Assistance Grant Program included in this bill would also provide flexible emergency funds that could be used to provide eligible families with short-term cash, non-cash, and in-kind assistance to address their basic needs, or for subsidized employment at the appropriate time that is safe and consistent with public health guidance.

Importantly, this fund would allow states to provide emergency cash assistance to families and individuals that have been left out of other relief measures like unemployment insurance (UI), including individuals returning from jail or prison and survivors of domestic violence, and young people from low-income neighborhoods just entering the labor market, among others. What's more, ample [research shows](#) that emergency funds can help survivors of domestic violence find and maintain safe housing. Limited savings, more extended periods of joblessness, higher food and utility costs have stretched families' already-limited budgets to the breaking point, leaving many unable to pay rent and without enough food to eat. Emergency cash assistance and in-kind support is an essential tool to help children and families get by and prevent a potential spike of poverty during this pandemic. Access to cash assistance is especially [critical for Black families who are more likely to live in states](#) with extremely low benefits and minimal access to them.

For families who are living in poverty or living one risk away from falling into poverty, these funds could prevent a downward spiral that would create even more significant economic and financial hardship. Evidence shows providing households with resources enables families to support their children's healthy development and future success. The funds from this bill would help avoid evictions, homelessness, foreclosure, and utility cut-offs; prevent children from being removed from their homes; provide resources for families to buy necessities like food, diapers, and personal hygiene supplies; and prevent the mental and physical health issues that accompany extreme stress.

We urge Congress to demonstrate their commitment to addressing systemic poverty and racial, and gender disparities by including the Pandemic TANF Assistance Act in the next COVID-19 legislative package. The emergency grant program included in this bill would help families and children, especially families of color, meet their basic needs and is an essential part of more significant action and assistance needed for our most vulnerable. Thank you for being a champion

for families and children who are living in poverty and whose needs are too often forgotten during times of crisis.

Sincerely,

A Better Balance
ACCESS
Advocates for Ohio's Future
African American Health Alliance
Alabama Arise
Alameda County Community Food Bank
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)
ATD Fourth World
Bread for the World
Bridgeways
California Association of Food Banks
California Immigrant Policy Center
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities
Casa San Jose
Center for Employment Opportunities
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for the Study of Social Policy
Child and Family Policy Center
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Aid
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Defense Fund – California
Children's Defense Fund – New York
Children's Defense Fund – Ohio
Children's Defense Fund – Southern Regional Office
Children's Defense Fund – Texas
Children's Health Fund
Children's HealthWatch
Children's Home Society of America
Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice
Church World Service
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Coalition on Human Needs
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
CommonSpirit Health
Communities In Schools, National Office
Community Advocates Public Policy Institute
Community Change Action
Community Legal Services of Philadelphia

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Connecticut Legal Services, Inc.
Connecticut Voices for Children
County Welfare Directors Association of California
DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)
Disability Rights Vermont
Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa Peace and Justice Office
End Child Poverty CA/GRACE Institute
Equal Rights Advocates
Equality California
Faith In Public Life
Family Centered Treatment Foundation
First Focus Campaign for Children
Florida Legal Services, Inc.
FPWA
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Futures Without Violence
Generations United
Georgia Budget & Policy Institute
Girls Inc.
Greater Boston Legal Services, Welfare Law Unit, on behalf of our clients
Greater Hartford Legal Aid
Heartland Alliance
Hispanic Federation
Homeless Persons Representation Project
Hunger Free Vermont
ICNA Council for Social Justice
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles
Jewish Women International
John Burton Advocates for Youth
Just Harvest
Justice for Migrant Women
Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice
Kentucky Equal Justice Center
Kids Forward
Legal Aid Justice Center
LIFT, Inc.
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Lutheran Services in America
Maine Children's Alliance
Maine Equal Justice
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Michigan League for Public Policy

Mid-City CAN (Community Advocacy Network)
Mississippi Center for Justice
Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)
NAACP
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Association of County Human Services Administrators
National Association of Social Workers
National Center on Adoption and Permanency
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Diaper Bank Network
National Domestic Violence Hotline
National Employment Law Project
National Family Support Network
National Human Services Assembly
National Immigration Law Center
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
National Respite Coalition
National Urban League
National WIC Association
National Women's Law Center
National Youth Employment Coalition
Nebraska Appleseed
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
New Haven Legal Assistance Association
New Mexico Immigrant Law Center
NextGen California
NM Center on Law and Poverty
NOBLE
Ohio Association of Foodbanks
Oregon Child Abuse Solutions
Our Children Oregon
Partners for Our Children
Partnership for America's Children
People's Action
Policy Matters Ohio
Poligon Education Fund
Prevent Child Abuse Oregon
Prevention Institute

Project Return
Public Advocacy for Kids
RESULTS
RESULTS DC
Results for America
San Francisco Senior & Disability Action
SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Silver State Equality
Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Statewide Poverty Action Network
Strycker's Bay Neighborhood Council
Texas Progressive Action Network
The Arc of the United States
The Center for Community Solutions
The Children's Campaign
The Economic Progress Institute
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
Ujima Inc: The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community
Union for Reform Judaism
Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition
Vermont Legal Aid, Inc.
Virginia Coalition for Immigrant Rights
Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations
Virginia Poverty Law Center
Voices for Vermont's Children
Washington State Budget & Policy Center
We All Rise
Western Center on Law and Poverty
Women's Equity Center and Action Network
Young Invincibles
ZERO TO THREE