

March 25, 2020

Dear Colleague:

America is facing an unprecedented public health and economic emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I believe I am speaking for all of us when I say this is one of the greatest challenges we have faced. That is why each and every member of the Senate Democratic caucus is fighting for bipartisan solutions that can immediately address the problems in front of us.

Unfortunately, Leader McConnell presented us with a partisan coronavirus relief bill on Sunday morning, written exclusively by Republicans. The Republican bill fell short in so many ways. It had inadequate resources for our hospitals and health care providers, no protections for workers as a condition to the government providing loans to corporations, and insufficient economic relief for struggling Americans. Rather than accept such a fundamentally flawed, partisan bill, Senate Democrats have been working hard on a *bipartisan* bill with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and President Trump. I am pleased to report that our hard work has paid off. We have reached an agreement to address this public health emergency, support our local communities, and most importantly, put America's workers first.

First, this relief package includes a dramatic expansion and reform of the unemployment insurance program. I have said from the beginning that America will need unemployment insurance on steroids to cover many more Americans and provide more generous benefits during this crisis, including Americans who have non-traditional employment. The extended UI program in this agreement increases the maximum unemployment benefit by \$600 per week and ensures that laid-off workers, on average, will receive their full pay for four months. It ensures that all workers are protected whether they work for businesses small, medium or large, along with self-employed and workers in the gig economy.

The structural reforms we have made would allow workers to get unemployment insurance quickly and would allow furloughed workers to stay on as employees, so that when, God willing, this crisis ends, they can quickly resume work with their employer and businesses can start running again. Because Democrats insisted on these changes, the assistance to working Americans is not just a one-shot deal, but a paycheck every work period that will go on for as long as the crisis lasts. We are giving America's workers some peace of mind, knowing that they will continue to have an income, and it will be there until we defeat this horrible virus.

Our second major priority was a Marshall Plan for our health care system so that it can provide needed treatment during this pandemic. I am happy to report that the final agreement will include more than \$150 billion for this plan. We cannot begin to heal our economy until we can turn the tide against the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of our negotiations, the amount of funding for hospitals and medical facilities has greatly—greatly—increased. We now have agreement to inject \$100 billion into our hospitals and health system, \$1 billion for the Indian Health Service, and billions more into critical investments such as personal and protective equipment for health care workers, testing supplies, increased workforce and training, new construction to house patients, an increase of the Strategic National Stockpile, medical research into COVID-19 and

Medicare payment increases to all hospitals and providers to ensure that they receive the funding they need during this crisis. State, local, and tribal governments that are propping up local health systems on their own were originally left out of the Republican bill entirely. As a result of our negotiations, state and local governments will now get \$150 billion, with \$8 billion set aside for tribal governments.

Our unity gave us important strength and leverage in negotiations. Since Sunday, Democrats made these significant improvements to the bill Leader McConnell introduced:

- 4 months of more unemployment insurance instead of 3 months.
- \$55 billion increase in the Marshall Plan for our Health Care System.
- \$150 billion for a state, tribal, and local Coronavirus Relief fund.
- \$10 billion for SBA emergency grants of up to \$10,000 to provide immediate relief for small business operating costs.
- \$17 billion for SBA to cover 6 months of payments for small businesses with existing SBA loans.
- \$30 billion in emergency education funding and \$25 billion in emergency transit funding.
- \$30 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund to provide financial assistance to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, as well as private nonprofits providing critical and essential services.
- More than \$10 billion for the Indian Health Services, and other tribal programs.
- Prohibit businesses controlled by the President, Vice President, Members of Congress, and heads of Executive Departments from receiving loans or investments from Treasury programs.
- Make rent, mortgage and utility costs eligible for SBA loan forgiveness.
- Ban stock buybacks for the term of the government assistance plus 1 year on any company receiving a government loan from the bill.
- Establish robust worker protections attached to all federal loans for businesses.
- Create real-time public reporting of Treasury transactions under the Act, including terms of loans, investments or other assistance to corporations.
- Create of Treasury Department Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery to provide oversight of Treasury loans and a Pandemic Response Accountability Committee to protect taxpayer dollars.
- Add a retention tax credit for employers to encourage businesses to keep workers on payroll during the crisis.
- Provide income tax exclusion for individuals who are receiving student loan repayment assistance from their employer.
- Eliminated \$3 billion bailout for big oil.
- Eliminated “secret bailout” provision that would have allowed bailouts to corporations to be concealed for 6 months.
- Saved hundreds of thousands of airline industry jobs and prohibited airlines from stock buybacks and CEO bonuses.

All of this progress would not have been possible without us standing together to reject Leader McConnell’s partisan first draft. Our unity strengthened our hand in these difficult negotiations.

The American people directly benefited from Senate Democrats' resolve in fighting to put workers first.

This is not a moment of celebration but rather one of necessity. All of us had to come together to agree on bipartisan legislation to send an infusion of desperately needed resources to our public health systems, state, local, and tribal governments, small businesses, and American workers. Like all compromise legislation, this bill is far from perfect. There are many issues that could have and would have been resolved differently if Democrats were in the majority. We will continue to push our Republican colleagues in the Senate and the Trump administration to fix what needs fixing, and hold them accountable for how the programs and taxpayer money is handled.

Every single one of our Democratic members, especially our ranking members, have worked around the clock on this legislation and I thank you for that tremendous effort. Because of your hard work and long hours, this bill will give vastly more support to American hospitals, families, and businesses—and it will protect workers.

Our nation is no stranger to adversity. But during difficult times, our nation comes together to help and support each other. Democrats are ready to give our unanimous consent to speed up the consideration of the bill and get the job done. Let's get it done for America's workers.

I thank you for your continued leadership and look forward to our ongoing discussions in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Schumer
Democratic Leader