

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