



STATE OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF GOVERNOR JAY INSLEE

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November 19, 2020

The Hon. Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

The Hon. Steven Mnuchin
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Treasury
Washington, D.C. 20220

The Hon. Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Secretary Mnuchin and Leaders Schumer and McCarthy:

I write to urge you to immediately resume negotiations on another coronavirus relief package that can be passed by Congress and signed into law before the end of the year. The resources provided by the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA), the CARES Act, and the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act were instrumental in helping states, workers, and families endure the spring and summer surges of COVID-19. Now, as we face the most dangerous period yet during this public health emergency, further federal aid is urgently needed to provide a bridge to the period when effective vaccines are widely available to the public.

As the first state in the nation hit by COVID-19, Washington State has aggressively confronted the virus from the beginning of the pandemic, taking difficult but necessary measures to save lives and keep Washingtonians safe and healthy. It is now abundantly clear we are facing a third wave of infection that is the worst we have seen yet. We continue to break new records for daily infections, with average cases doubling over the last two weeks, and have watched our test-positivity and hospital occupancy, especially the intensive care unit (ICU), increase in communities across the state. This week, I announced a four-week set of statewide restrictions on activities — including indoor gatherings, indoor dining, and indoor retail — to control the spread of disease. We do not take these measures lightly. We are painfully aware that these steps, guided by science, will increase hardship for families, workers, and businesses that are already suffering. But we must act now and act quickly to prevent hospitals from becoming overwhelmed and to save the lives of our fellow Washingtonians.

The federal government now has a responsibility to act as well. Hundreds of thousands of our residents are already struggling with joblessness, hunger, and housing insecurity, and have watched multiple forms of federal relief expire or be exhausted since the summer. These needs will only grow worse as additional core provisions of the CARES Act are set to expire at the end of 2020, including Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and existing Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF).

Americans will face irreparable harm if small businesses, families, workers, and state and local governments are forced to confront the coming months without immediate federal action.

Only Congress can provide the size and scale of relief needed in this moment. In Washington State, we are on track to exhaust 100 percent of our existing CRF and federal testing funds, including tens of millions allocated this week for rental and utility assistance. We are facing a historic decline in revenue due to the economic crisis caused by COVID-19, which has created significant challenges for our state budget. Since the pandemic hit, I have vetoed hundreds of millions of dollars in state spending, implemented a hiring freeze, canceled wage increases, and instituted mandatory furloughs. And our industries and small businesses have gone above and beyond to do their part while trying to stay afloat. We are all committed to safeguarding our people from COVID-19 but, like all states, we simply cannot meet the urgent and dire needs without further federal aid.

I urge you to immediately return to the negotiating table to develop a package that enables Washington and all states to protect lives and livelihoods, including:

- **Unemployment Insurance and Paid Sick Leave.** Renew the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (PUC) at a flat weekly rate to ensure the ability to swiftly deliver benefits to claimants, ideally the \$600 rate under the CARES Act. Extend Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and FFCRA Paid Sick Leave, as well as other measures to help states accommodate the continued historic demand on unemployment insurance (UI) systems. A separate letter from our Employment Security Division (ESD) laying out specific needs is forthcoming.
- **Additional Aid for State, Local and Tribal Governments.** Provide direct, flexible funding for state, local, and tribal governments, and extend the December 30, 2020, deadline to expend remaining funds from the first Coronavirus Relief Fund. Deliver additional flexibility to enable funding to be used for revenue replacement.
- **Renewal of the Paycheck Protection Program.** Renew and improve the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to enable the Small Business Administration to quickly partner with lenders and take new applications from borrowers, including second loans from restaurants and other hard-hit businesses.
- **Testing, Contact Tracing and Vaccine Distribution.** Meet the significant unmet needs to support and expand COVID-19 testing and conduct contact tracing in communities across Washington, which are critical to controlling the virus and reducing the rate of infection. As cases are increasing dramatically, we are beginning to once again see testing supply shortages that will challenge our ability to contain COVID spread. Dedicate the necessary resources to ensure timely and equitable distribution of vaccines by state, local, and tribal governments after they are approved by FDA to be safe and effective.
- **Direct Payments.** Provide another round of direct economic impact payments from the U.S. Treasury for eligible taxpayers and their dependents.
- **Housing and Rental Assistance.** Extend the federal moratorium on evictions, which we have already implemented at the state level. Provide additional funding to support residents

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and property owners alike to help homeowners stay in their homes, enable renters to meet their obligations while complying with state public health orders, and help shelter those experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.

- **Food Assistance.** Additional support is urgently needed to ensure that Washingtonians have access to food, shelters and food banks can be adequately stocked, and farmers and producers have access to critical tools such as PPE and short-term purchasing assistance. Increase SNAP benefits to meet the scale of the food security crisis.
- **Schools and Broadband.** Dedicate additional funding for child care and K-12 schools to enhance safety of facilities, support in-person instruction, and create learning environments that are safe and responsible for students and educators alike. Provide critically needed resources to support broadband connectivity in rural and underserved areas and ensure students learning through remote instruction are not left behind.

I appreciate your consideration and attention to our urgent needs. The consequences of waiting to act until the 117th Congress would be as severe and wide-ranging as any we have faced during this emergency. Washingtonians, and the American people, cannot wait any longer.

Very truly yours,



Jay Inslee
Governor

CC: Washington State Congressional Delegation