



April 9, 2020

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

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

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kamala Harris
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy and Senators Feinstein and Harris:

We write with deep gratitude for your commitment and leadership as our nation struggles with the impact of COVID-19. We are especially grateful for your work to pass the CARES Act, which will have a profoundly positive impact on children and families in need and the national economy. As you and your colleagues develop further emergency relief and recovery legislation, we urge you to include the Priorities to Strengthen Families contained in the attached document. We write on behalf of the 66 organizations listed on this letter.

Our coalition was originally formed to address child and family poverty in California and today comprises 118 diverse organizations, more than 60 organizational partners and 60,000 individual Californians.

The attached Priorities to Strengthen Families were developed from our years of work, the experiences of our partners, and the expertise of some of the nation's preeminent researchers on poverty. Taken together, these Priorities provide a foundation to help low income children and families recover from the pandemic and contribute to the nation's overall economic recovery.

Each recommendation is based on a program or service that has been proven to be successful and cost-effective -- rigorous data and other analysis has been applied. The recommendations address the need to provide housing and food stability for vulnerable children; necessary healthcare to protect all Americans; child-care for our essential workers; essential support for our nation's foster youth; and basic education, workforce and housing support.

We look forward to answering any questions or providing any additional information that may be helpful. Please contact Conway Collis at conwaycollis@grace-inc.org or (626)356-4205 or Jackie Wong at jackiewong@grace-inc.org or (916)356-4219.

Sincerely,



Dolores Huerta
President
Dolores Huerta Foundation



Conway Collis
President and CEO
GRACE/End Child Poverty CA

Asian Americans Advancing
Justice - Los Angeles
Bay Area Regional Health
Inequities Initiative
California Alliance of Child and
Family Services
California Alternative Payment
Program Association (CAPPA)
California Association of Food
Banks
California Coalition for Youth
California Latinas for Reproductive
Justice
California Partnership
CAPPA Children's Foundation
CAP OC/OC Food Bank
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara
County
Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles
Child Care Law Center
Child Care Resource and Referral
Center CA
Children Now
Children's Defense Fund - CA
Children's Resource & Referral
Children's Institute
Compass Family Services
County Welfare Directors
Association of CA

Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent
De Paul USA
Dolores Huerta Foundation
Equal Rights Advocates
Fathers & Families of San Joaquin
First 5 Alameda County
Fresno Barrios Unidos
Fresno EOC Street Saints
Friends Committee on Legislation
of California
GRACE Institute/End Child
Poverty California
Hayward Promise Neighborhoods
Head Start California
Healing Dialogue and Action
Hunger Action LA
Jewish Center for Justice
John Burton Advocates for Youth
LA Conservation Corps
Legal Aid at Work
Los Angeles Community Action
Network (LA CAN)
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
Lutheran Office of Public Policy
California
Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom
Center
Maryvale
Mission Economic Development
Agency

National Association of Social
Workers, California Chapter
National Foster Youth Institute
Para Los Niños
Parent Voices CA
Rise Together
San Diego for Every Child
San Francisco Latino Democratic
Club
Save the Children
SHIELDS for Families
South Bay Community Services
Southern California Grantmakers
St. John's Well Child & Family
Center
Stable, Secure and Strong
The Central Valley Urban Institute
The Chicano Federation
The Children's Movement of
Fresno
The Children's Partnership
United Ways of California
Urban Strategies Council
Western Center on Law and
Poverty
YMCA of San Diego County
Youth Justice Coalition L.A.
Youth Will

Attachment

CC: Members of California Congressional Delegation
The Honorable Pete Aguilar
The Honorable Nanette Barragán
The Honorable Karen Bass

The Honorable Ami Bera
The Honorable Julia Brownley
The Honorable Ken Calvert

The Honorable Salud Carbajal
The Honorable Tony Cárdenas
The Honorable Judy Chu
The Honorable Gilbert Cisneros
The Honorable Paul Cook
The Honorable Luis Correa
The Honorable Jim Costa
The Honorable TJ Cox
The Honorable Susan Davis
The Honorable Mark DeSaulnier
The Honorable Anna Eshoo
The Honorable John Garamendi
The Honorable Jimmy Gomez
The Honorable Josh Harder
The Honorable Jared Huffman
The Honorable Ro Khanna
The Honorable Doug La Malfa
The Honorable Barbara Lee
The Honorable Mike Levin
The Honorable Ted Lieu
The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
The Honorable Alan Lowenthal

The Honorable Doris Matsui
The Honorable Tom McClintock
The Honorable Jerry McNerney
The Honorable Grace Napolitano
The Honorable Devin Nunes
The Honorable Jimmy Panetta
The Honorable Scott Peters
The Honorable Katie Porter
The Honorable Harley Rouda
The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
The Honorable Raul Ruiz
The Honorable Linda Sánchez
The Honorable Adam Schiff
The Honorable Brad Sherman
The Honorable Jackie Speier
The Honorable Eric Swalwell
The Honorable Mark Takano
The Honorable Mike Thompson
The Honorable Norma Torres
The Honorable Juan Vargas
The Honorable Maxine Waters



ECPCA Priorities to Strengthen Families

April 9, 2020

These priorities are focused on children and families living in poverty. As a coalition, we also support recommendations submitted by partner and allied organizations.

BASIC LIVING EXPENSES

- **Further Expand the Child Tax Credit (“CTC”)** While the Tax Cuts & Jobs Act (“TCJA”) included an important expansion of the CTC, the expansion has had an uneven impact on families with different income levels. Under the TCJA, the non-refundable CTC was doubled to \$2,000 per child, while the refundable CTC was raised from \$1,000 to a maximum of only \$1,400 per child. Given that the credit phases in only after the family earns enough (\$2,500) to qualify for *any* refundable CTC, the expansion under the TCJA creates significant inequalities. Consequently, the following proposals provide basic stability for low - and very - low income families with children. We propose three key changes to the federal CTC program and that these changes be applied retroactively to 2019:
 - Make the CTC fully refundable for all filers, with no minimum income requirement and no phase in. This would extend eligibility for the full CTC to the one-third of families who earn too little to receive the full CTC.
 - Broaden eligibility to include children age 17 (the credit is currently available for children up to age 16).
 - Increase the CTC by \$1,000 for children age 6 to 17, and by \$1,600 for children age 0 to 5. Consider phase-out of the additional credits starting at \$30,000 as needed to reduce costs.
- **Provide Unemployment Insurance to Farmworkers in ALL States.**

TANF and SNAP

These proposals would expand federal benefits and support to states for these programs during the pandemic period. The enhanced federal support is crucial, as states facing major revenue declines and budget deficits will otherwise need to consider major cuts in these

safety net programs. To ensure that the state's existing safety net programs are adequately resourced and that states have flexibility to best meet the needs of its citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic, we make the following recommendations for federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families ("TANF") and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP"):

- **Temporarily exempt state TANF programs from the Federal Work Participation Rate.** This will facilitate compliance with state and federal public health guidance on social distancing, shelter-in-place orders, and other requirements associated with maintaining public health and safety during the pandemic. Also temporarily suspend the federal time limit on benefit receipt to allow families to receive emergency help during the emergency without affecting future eligibility.
- **Temporarily increase the federal TANF block grant by 20 percent** for states that do not curtail cash benefits or reduce eligibility.
- **Provide a 15 percent SNAP benefit increase** with automatic extensions of the increase during the recession.
- **Remove eligibility restrictions for SNAP** during the pandemic by easing administrative rules; including suspending student eligibility rules; providing presumptive eligibility for foster youth exiting the foster care system and benefits to non-citizens, or, at a minimum, removing the 5-year waiting period currently in place for lawfully permanent resident adults to access SNAP.
- **Continue the Emergency Allotment (EA)** added to SNAP Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Cards bringing the total amount of households' benefits to the maximum monthly benefit allowed for the duration of the recession, and provide a flat EA for households already receiving the previously authorized maximum benefit.

HEALTHCARE and MEDICAID

- **Provide Immediate Funding for Community Health Clinics (CHC):**
 - Ensure that 8% of the new \$100B funding be awarded to CHCs. Across the nation, 8% of all persons rely on community health centers for their care. The numbers are even greater in California, where our health centers serve 7.2 million patients annually - almost 17% of Californians turn to CHCs for their care.
 - This estimate is also aligned with financial modeling that projects **\$7.6 billion is needed immediately.**
- **Disaggregate COVID-19 Data by Race and Ethnicity.** Given the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the African American, Latinx, API and Native

American communities, it is important to collect real time racial data on the impact of the crisis on these communities so that federal responses can respond immediately.

- **Expand Emergency Medicaid to cover those who are not eligible** for regular Medicaid but who are in need of assistance including but not limited to Dreamers, TPS-holders, and mixed status families; and confirm that testing and treatment for COVID-19 and related conditions are considered treatment for an emergency condition under 42 U.S.C. 1396b(v).
- **Temporarily Increase Disproportionate Share Hospital (“DSH”) allotments** by 2.5 percent for the duration of the public health emergency. Cancel the Medicaid DSH cuts for fiscal year 2020 and reduce or eliminate the DSH cuts scheduled for fiscal year 2021.
- **Expand the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (“FMAP”) by 10 percent** across the board.

CHILD CARE

- **Provide immediate childcare funding for essential workers, including healthcare and healthcare staff, social services workers, first responders and those in the food supply chain i.e. farmworkers, grocery clerks, food delivery personnel;** waive family fees for all subsidized childcare programs and increase subsidized childcare for families earning less than 250% FPL.
- **Pay providers to cover ongoing and COVID-19 related operating costs** while they are closed for public health reasons, or open but with reduced enrollment to serve children of essential workers.

CHILD WELFARE

- **Increase Child Welfare Agency Title IV-B Funding:** \$1 billion in increased funding with no match requirement through Title IV-B-1 is necessary to provide the resources that child protection agencies and states require during this period. COVID-19 is placing unprecedented challenges on state, local, and tribal child welfare systems. Family support, family strengthening, and the importance of a permanency connection have never been more critical. Child welfare agencies must have the ability during the COVID-19 crisis to engage directly with families and to allow children who can safely remain in their homes to thrive in that setting.
- **Provide for an Increase in All Foster Care Payments across all programs/placements** including placements that provide specialty mental health services.

- Eliminate the Federal Eligibility Component for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis. Alternatively, temporarily raise the Federal Reimbursement rate to 80% as baseline funding to States.
- **Increase Transition Aged Youth Funding and Flexibility in Extended Foster Care (EFC):** Increase Title IV-E Chafee funds by \$500 million and increase flexibility in the fund to allow for coverage of basic housing-related needs and other COVID-19 related needs; suspend school and work requirements as a condition of participation in EFC; Permit young adults to remain in EFC for 12 months upon reaching the maximum eligible age and continue Title IV-E funding to States for this purpose; and Prohibit states from discharging youth age 18 and older who are in EFC, unless the youth specifically requests discharge to a safe setting.

EDUCATION

- **Provide COVID-19 Stimulus Federal Funding for Pre-K through Community College to address increased challenges created by the crisis** targeted for low income and special populations such as the following: Title I programs for disadvantaged students, Special Education, Head Start, After School Programs and the E-Rate program.

WORKFORCE

- **Increase funding for Workforce Opportunity and Innovation Act**, with a targeted investment in the Youth Program and flexibility for Workforce Boards to serve low income youth inclusive of foster, justice-involved, homeless youth. These populations, who are often youth of color, are disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 recession.

HOUSING

- **Community Development Block Grant funding increase:** This funding will allow state and local governments to have a flexible resource to address the needs of their communities when mitigating the impacts of COVID-19.
- **Provide \$5 billion in emergency housing assistance** to help communities minimize homelessness and identify space (like hotels and motels) for isolation and quarantine, help with outreach to make sure people facing homelessness have safe space.

For further information contact Conway Collis at conwaycollis@grace-inc.org or (626)356-4205 or Jackie Wong at jackiewong@grace-inc.org or (916)498- 3320.