



**Citizens' Committee
for Children** of NEW YORK



March 23, 2020

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senate
Washington DC, 20510

All Honorable Members of the New York State Delegation
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Minority Leader Schumer, Senator Gillibrand, and the New York State Congressional Delegation:

The Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC) is a 75-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

We thank you for your continued leadership in ensuring the well-being of children and families in New York as you develop and negotiate a third federal relief package in response to the COVID-19 crisis. This pandemic will have long-standing and devastating impacts on New York, and those impacts will be especially detrimental on the already disproportionately at-risk populations in our state. There is an urgent need to ensure that children and families are not further plunged into financial, social and physical hardship by the current crisis, and that methods to address these needs are included in the third stimulus package passed.

CCC applauds the passage of the *Families First Act*, but in a third relief package, Congress must pass legislation that further supports and funds the health, education, safety and economic well-being of children during this crisis. Equally important, stimulus relief legislation must support the non-profit and health and human services sector who are also on the front lines of the response to this crisis. This relief will enable nonprofit organizations to remain open and mitigate losses, so they can continue to serve populations who need it most, such as low-income families and families in temporary housing.

To help New York's most vulnerable children and families, we urge you to do the following:

The Human Services Sector

- \$60 billion in emergency stimulus funding for all human service agencies and their employees to pay for the following:
 - Ensure nonprofits on the front lines can continue to serve those most in need.
 - Give payroll tax credits to all human service organizations.



- Provide universal charitable tax deductions for contributions through the end of 2021.
- Sustain federal human service programs, including SNAP and the Emergency Food and Shelter Program.
- Keep 12 million people employed across the country - 10% of U.S. GDP.
- Allow **all** public charities to participate in the Small Business Interruption Loan program.
- Increase the non-itemized charitable contribution deduction to \$2,000.

Economic Security

- Implement an immediate and direct cash assistance program of at least \$2,000 that prioritizes children and is available to all children who need it most. The direct cash support should be robust and on scale with the crisis, reach those quickly who need it most, including those with no income, and available in timely payments until the economy recovers. It also should not result in the unintended exclusion of babies and young people who would qualify now but would not have been eligible in 2018, or of those who are difficult to reach, such as families in temporary housing. We know that an immediate cash-transfer to low-and middle-income families during this public health emergency will help to address the loss of income too many households are experiencing now, and others will endure as the economy continues to slow down, businesses close and layoffs occur.
- Expand the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to reach low-income children and families and make federal resources available quickly and regularly during this public health crisis and economic slowdown.
- Provide emergency cash assistance to families through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.
- Require all states to provide no less than 26 weeks of basic Unemployment Insurance, which would replace at least 2/3 of a worker's wages, and provide mandatory work sharing for all states.
- Ensure immigrants—including the “Dreamers” and people with Temporary Protected Status—have extended work authorization.
- Improve paid leave by building on the *Families First* legislation and ensuring protections for grocery, pharmacy, child care, health care, and restaurant workers.

Health

- Increase the Medicaid FMAP by at least ten percentage points.
- Mandate 12-month continuous eligibility in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- Reduce enrollment barriers and red tape for enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP.
- Enroll newborns without alternative coverage in Medicaid automatically.
- Provide Medicaid coverage to any population not currently eligible.
- Increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for every household enrolled in the program.
- Suspend the operation of the public charge rule for the duration of the crisis and ensure that no medical services utilized during the crisis apply to any reinstated rule.



- Behavioral Health
 - Ensure that tele-mental health services provided by qualified mental health professionals are reimbursable under Medicaid, and eliminate regulatory barriers to widely implementing telehealth in all private and public health plans.
 - Establish immediate enhanced payments during the current State of Emergency to human services provider agencies to provide added flexibility to deal with the pandemic, including enhanced "hazard pay" to all direct care and clinical staff to be able ensure adequate staffing for programs and residences and well as to prevent workforce retention issues.

Housing

- Fund the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) at \$300 million and allow for broader use of funds to meet the temporary housing, health, safety, transportation, and educational needs of homeless children and youth, including the unique needs of young children, unaccompanied youth, children and youth with disabilities, and English Language Learners.
- Increase Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs by \$128 million and bypass the current competitive grant process and distribute to existing grantees.
- Increase the Service Connect for Youth on the Streets program by \$22 million and also bypass the current competitive grant process and distribute to existing grantees.
- Ensure that colleges and universities create plans to support students experiencing homelessness or housing instability during campus shutdowns.
- Implement a moratorium on evictions nationwide.
- Increase access to civil legal services for families facing evictions after moratoriums are lifted, or if moratoriums are not put into effect.

Child Welfare

- Boost Title IV-E Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Chafee) funds above the current level of \$143 million and temporarily waive the 30 percent Chafee housing cap for the duration of the crisis in order to provide additional support for living independent services for current and former foster youth.
- Require a percent point FMAP increase for Title IV-E to match the Medicaid FMAP increase to support children and families in the child welfare system.

Education

- \$50 billion in child care funding to be used for the following:
 - Pay providers to cover their ongoing operating costs when they are closed so their financial security, and the security of educators they employ, is not threatened. This must include centers as well as home-based providers, such as family child care homes and family, friend, and neighbor care.
 - Eliminate copayments or tuition for families during this crisis and ensure that providers are still paid the full amount for that enrolled slot.



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- Provide paid sick leave for educators and provide funding to providers to fully cover this cost.
- Provide higher levels of compensation such as hazard pay for child care providers and educators serving children of frontline workers or operating for longer hours.
- Help state or local agencies or organizations keep track of child care programs that are closing and those that have available slots, in order to identify child care providers that may need assistance and to match supply and demand.
- Purchase materials for providers that cannot afford or find supplies on their own.
- Pay for staff at call centers and child care resource and referral agencies to respond to the needs of child care workers, including to assist them in offering guidance to the families they serve as they cope with the current crisis.
- Provide training and medical support for child care providers on health and safety practices in response to the virus, available in all relevant languages.
- Ensure that emergency child care funding includes care for non-profit human services workers in addition to health care workers and first responders.
- Accelerate efforts to address technology gaps and access to broadband and devices for students and families.

These actions and investments are not only timely but necessary to ensure that children and families and populations who will be hit the hardest by this public health and economic crisis, are best served by a federal stimulus package. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your colleagues on further relief efforts as this situation develops over the coming weeks, months and year.

Respectfully,

Jennifer March
Executive Director
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Cc (in order of districts):

The Honorable Lee M. Zeldin, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Pete King, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Thomas Suozzi, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Kathleen M. Rice, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Gregory Meeks, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Grace Meng, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Nydia Velazquez, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Yvette D. Clarke, U.S House of Representatives



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The Honorable Jerrold Nadler, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Max Rose U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Adriano Espaillat, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Jose E. Serrano, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Eliot Engel, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Nita Lowey, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Sean Patrick Maloney, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Antonio Delgado, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Paul D. Tonko, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Elise M. Stefanik, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Anthony Brindisi, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Tom Reed, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable John M. Katko, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Joseph Morelle, U.S House of Representatives
The Honorable Brian D. Higgins, U.S House of Representatives