

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 8, 2020

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

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy,

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has upended the stability of our economy and the livelihoods of workers across the country. Last month nearly ten million workers filed unemployment claims in a two-week period. According to the Economic Policy Institute, nearly 20 million workers will likely be laid off or furloughed by July. Workers desperately need our help. As you craft the next package of relief measures for our communities in response to COVID-19, we respectfully request that you provide no less than \$15.1 billion for our nation's workforce development system.

Our workforce development system is tasked with making sure that all workers, particularly those with barriers to employment, have the skills they need for meaningful employment. During this time of turmoil, our existing workforce system is a nimble and important support for our workers. Workforce boards, labor unions, community colleges, community-based organizations, small businesses, and other stakeholders are training health care, direct care, and front-line workers, but they are in urgent need of more resources. States are using federal funds to provide online resources to current job seekers for activities like transitional employment and for employers who are looking to hire new employees or maintain their existing workforce, but these operations are running out of funding. By strengthening federal investments, we can support reemployment and layoff aversion strategies, as well as upskilling and reskilling opportunities and employment services for displaced and dislocated workers.

We appreciate your leadership to secure \$345 million for National Dislocated Worker Grants in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, but we need a significantly larger investment to meet the growing demand for assistance. We must invest billions, not millions in our workers and workforce system - the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act provided more than \$7.7 billion in workforce funding. During this national emergency, we can support the economic recovery of states and localities by directing funding to our workforce system as authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA outlines a clear vision for addressing the challenges of workers dislocated or displaced by COVID-19, but to be successful we must provide the robust investments necessary to accommodate the needs of workers. According to the National Skills Coalition, the U.S. invests 25 percent less in workforce programming today than we did before the Great Recession. Early interventions now will help prevent further economic distress and allow our economy to recover quickly while increasing access to good paying jobs for workers who are suffering through this crisis.

Within the \$15.1 billion investment in our workforce development system, we specifically request that you:

- Provide \$500,000,000 for additional phases of National Dislocated Worker Grants to support workers in industries like hospitality, transportation, manufacturing, and retail that are facing massive layoffs. The National Dislocated Worker Grants could be used to support training and temporary employment for immediate needs in our response to COVID-19, such as supporting health care workers, delivering medicine, food, and other supplies to vulnerable populations, or organizing and coordinating recovery efforts. \$200,000,000 should specifically target states and local areas most heavily affected by COVID-19 for temporary employment services, including short-term training for health care, direct care and front-line workers, as well as replenishing the National Dislocated Worker Grants used to prepare for the upcoming wildfire and hurricane seasonal disasters. The distribution of funds should prioritize employers that maintain robust labor standards and high-quality jobs.
- Invest \$2,500,000,000 in State Dislocated Worker Grants to scale up rapid response activities identified by states and localities on the frontlines of the COVID-19 national emergency, and to support layoff aversion strategies and provide necessary support to unemployed individuals and to employers facing layoffs. The Governor's Reserve Fund and Rapid Response funding should be used for short-term training for health care, direct care, and front-line workers, including drivers and delivery services, IT support occupations, HAZMAT, maintenance and cleaning, and for virtual or online services for job seekers. The distribution of funds should be directed to employers that maintain robust labor standards and high-quality jobs.
- Support \$2,500,000,000 for WIOA Title I-B Youth Workforce Investment Activities to support summer and year-round employment for youth, who are disproportionately affected by diminished labor market opportunities as a result of the economic consequences of the COVID-19 national emergency.
- Allocate \$2,500,000,000 for adult employment and training activities to support employee retention strategies for employers facing economic hardship as a result of the national emergency. This should include using no less than \$1 billion on incumbent worker training strategies such as on-the-job training, customized training, apprenticeships, and Short-Time Compensation programs, and remaining funds on innovative strategies to provide support to workers facing underemployment (including independent contractors), individuals seeking work, or who are adversely affected by economic changes within their communities due to the COVID-19 national emergency. These strategies should include supportive services and needs-based payments, career navigation supports, provision of virtual services and virtual employment and training activities, and professional development for workforce development staff to deliver these services.
- Provide \$1,000,000,000 for WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy to expand the capacity of adult education providers across the U.S. to serve adults with low-literacy levels negatively affected by the economic consequences of the COVID-19 national emergency. This should include the infrastructure needed for services and educational resources supporting digital literacy, which has become increasingly critical as a result of the COVID-19 national emergency. Funds will also equip adult education providers to partner more closely with workforce development partners on proven strategies such as Integrated Education and Training that can prepare adult learners for in-demand industry sectors and occupations on an accelerated timeline. Of the funds provided, at least five percent should be used at the state level for corrections education.
- Expand investments in Employment Services to \$1,000,000,000 to provide reemployment services for unemployed and underemployed workers, including those receiving unemployment insurance as a result of the COVID-19 national emergency, providing for services such as reemployment services, job search assistance, job matching services based

on experience of workers, and helping employers dealing with layoffs or hiring new workers to respond to the COVID-19 national emergency. Of these funds, \$100 million should be used to for workforce information systems improvements, including for electronic tools and system building.

- Provide \$250,000,000 for programs supporting reentry populations as they face additional employment challenges due to a changing labor market as a result of the COVID-19 national emergency. These funds should be used to better align programs with the workforce system and supports under WIOA.
- Invest \$500,000,000 in Job Corps. This funding will make sure that Job Corps centers can retain existing residential capacity, increase staffing capacity once the period of national emergency is complete, and address costs related to infrastructure projects, including technology modernization needed to provide for virtual and remote learning.
- Allocate \$250,000,000 to increase capacity and recruitment efforts for YouthBuild. This should include individuals who may have dropped out of high school in circumstances related to the COVID-19 national emergency, with a priority for funds being used to support infrastructure projects.
- Expand investments in Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers and Native American Programs by \$100,000,000 for each program for additional supports and opportunities for job seekers most affected by the COVID-19 national emergency.
- Expand administrative capacity at the Employment and Training Administration by \$50,000,000 to expand capacity for additional funding and grant activities to make sure that funds are provided to states in an expedited manner, and to provide additional technical assistance to states and local areas.

Robust investments in these programs will help workers across the country gain the skills and support services to provide for themselves and their families and boost our nation's economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. We appreciate your consideration of our request and look forward to continuing to work with you to make investments that benefit workers a top priority.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Andy Levin
Member of Congress

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