

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 2, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell:

Nearly seven weeks ago, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the *Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act* or the *HEROES Act* to provide relief for the American people from the acute public health and economic crisis brought about by COVID-19. With the crisis deepening, we implore you to bring this bill to the floor for consideration before the Senate recesses. The American people cannot afford for us to wait two more weeks before taking aggressive action to slow the explosion of this disease.

Since the House vote on the *HEROES Act*, states and tribes across the country have had to pause and reverse reopening plans as positive coronavirus tests have reached all-time highs. As of June 25, new cases were up 77% in Arizona, 70% in Texas, and 66% in Florida. Last week, seven states reported new highs for current coronavirus hospitalizations including Arizona, Arkansas, California, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. Hospital intensive care units are nearing capacity with an influx of COVID-19 patients. Economic disaster continues to unfurl, revealing new and more devastating effects as coronavirus takes its toll on families, workers, and businesses.

Provisions in the *HEROES Act* could have helped Americans in every corner of our nation during these past seven weeks, but instead, we are facing the expiration of key response measures while the number of cases rise; the number of deaths increase; and businesses and families continue to suffer. Recent developments and data only underscore the importance of a number of the provisions in the *HEROES Act*, including:

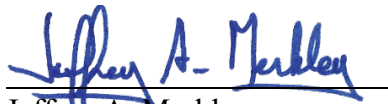
- Funding for hospitals and providers to ensure that they are prepared for and can manage surges in hospitalizations and ICU admittances, as is occurring in a number of states currently;
- Funding to increase coronavirus testing, contact tracing and isolation measures, as other countries have done to more successfully contain the spread of the virus;
- Ensuring Americans can access free coronavirus treatment to avoid or reduce the severity of a catastrophic second wave of infections;
- Preserving health coverage for Americans losing their employer-provided health insurance with COBRA subsidies to maintain their coverage and creating a special enrollment period in the Affordable Care Act exchanges for uninsured Americans;
- Financial assistance to states, tribes, and local communities so that schools can reopen and parents can return to work and they can continue providing critical services like health, housing assistance, and first responders;

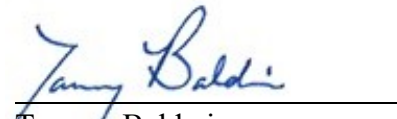
- Help for all people who have lost income to make ends meet, including by boosting SNAP and nutrition assistance, providing rental assistance, cash payments, and extending enhanced unemployment insurance benefits;
- A strong, enforceable standard to require all workplaces to develop and implement infection control plans based on public health expertise, and preventing employers from retaliating against workers who report infection control problems; and
- Supporting small businesses with a strengthened Paycheck Protection Program to ensure that it reaches underserved communities, nonprofits of all sizes and types.


We implore you to bring the *HEROES Act* to the Senate floor for debate and amendments before the Senate recesses, not because each of us endorses every provision in that bill, but in recognition of the urgency of the crisis gripping our country and the need for the Senate to respond. Our nation has now suffered more than 128,000 deaths and more than 2.63 million confirmed cases, the worst outbreak in the world. Unlike most other developed countries, which implemented strong, national responses built on robust testing, the U.S. is seeing the pandemic continue to gallop forward with tens of thousands of additional cases being confirmed each day. Our nation’s top public health experts have warned that this is only the beginning of the crisis. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell this week told Congress “the path forward for the economy is extraordinarily uncertain” and will depend on the government providing relief and supporting recovery “for as long as needed.”

It would be an abdication of our most basic responsibilities for us to leave for the Fourth of July holiday without Senate response to the crisis gripping America. We urge you to bring the *HEROES Act* to the floor without delay. Inaction is not an option.

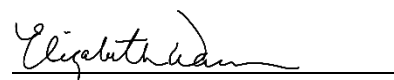
Sincerely,


  
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

  
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

  
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

  
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

  
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



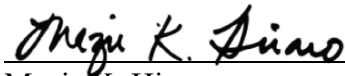
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

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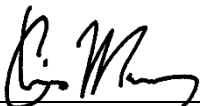
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



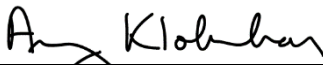
Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



Chris Murphy  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator