

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 18, 2020

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

Dear Leader McConnell:

One month ago this week, the 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.

It is unacceptable that the Senate has taken zero action to debate or pass the HEROES Act for this entire month, and it is critical that the provisions in HEROES be debated and considered on the floor before the July 4 recess. Waiting until the end of July when we are right up against the expiration of key response measures represents inexcusable delay and dereliction of duty that would put families, workers and businesses across our country in an even more precarious position by preventing an economic recovery.

Our nation has now suffered more than 115,000 deaths and more than 2 million confirmed cases, with tens of thousands of additional cases being confirmed each day there is little sign of abating in the United States. Some states that have reopened, including Arizona, Texas, Florida, are now seeing alarming upticks in cases and hospitalizations. Dr. Anthony Fauci said as recently as June 9 that “we’re still at the beginning” of the crisis. Fed Chair Jerome Powell said on June 10<sup>th</sup> that unemployment remains historically high and has been the most severe for lower wage workers, women, Black and Hispanic populations, and that the economy will need aid from Congress for a long time to come. In short, inaction is having a calamitous cost to the health and economic crisis that will be with us for the remainder of 2020, if not longer.

As we write, our nation is also being transformed by a wave of activism in response to police brutality and the recent killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. These protests have called on each of us to combat deep, systemic racial injustice. The COVID-19 crisis has only underscored many of the longstanding structural inequities and disinvestments that have resulted in crises that disproportionately harm people of color, especially Black and Brown Americans.

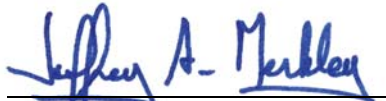
If we fail to act and meet this moment with the urgency it requires, then some of the key immediate relief from our previous bipartisan relief act will expire on July 31<sup>st</sup> and send the frail economy into a deepening spiral that will hurt millions of Americans. As you well know, over 40 million Americans have lost their jobs. Millions more are living on the brink. Essential workers continue to lack PPE and basic protections. Cities, towns and rural communities are poised to lose teachers, firefighters and their most essential services if we don’t act now.

Recent developments and data only underscore the importance of a number of the provisions in the HEROES Act, including:

- Protections for essential workers;
- 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 and housing assistance;
- Provisions to ensure safe and accessible voting for all eligible voters in November;
- Help for all people who have lost income to make ends meet, including by boosting SNAP, providing rental assistance, cash payments, and extending enhanced unemployment insurance benefits;
- A national strategy to increase testing and contact tracing to avoid a catastrophic second wave of infections;
- Vital funding to ensure the U.S. Postal Service can continue to deliver mail to people across the country; and
- In recognition that the virus and its impacts are hitting communities of color the hardest, policies to ensure explicitly that the bill invests in and protects the health and economic well-being of all Black and Brown people living in America.

It would be an abdication of our most basic responsibilities for us to leave for the 4th of July holiday without bringing the HEROES Act to the floor for a vote and to consider amendments to this bill that could make it even better. Inaction is not an option.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator




Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



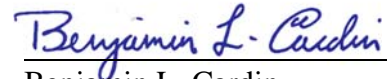
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



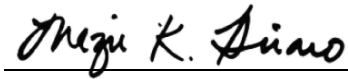
Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

/s/ Dick Durbin

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



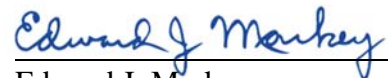
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator