

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 25, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representative
U.S. Capitol, H-232
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol, S-221
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Madam Speaker and Leader Schumer:

We applaud your leadership in uniting the Democratic Caucus in both chambers to enact President Biden's visionary \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, which provided both the resources and direction for our country to crush COVID-19 and provide urgent economic relief to the American people. We wish to commend you on a generational legislative accomplishment, which enjoys overwhelming and bipartisan popularity across the country, lays the foundation for a just and equitable recovery, and restores Americans' faith in government. We write to share our priorities on the size, scope, and speed of the next legislative package, and to share our concerns that passing a reduced package first to garner bipartisan support will sacrifice our chance to secure the broad investment for racial, climate, and economic justice that voters backed in the 2020 elections. We urge you not to decrease the scope of ambition, but to instead use this window of opportunity to make the down payments we urgently need to tackle the intersecting crises facing our nation.

As we reflect on the tragedy of more than half a million Americans who died as a result of this pandemic, the tens of millions who lost their jobs and health care, and the millions more who experienced food and housing insecurity, we are grateful for the fierce and unrelenting ambition of President Biden, Congressional Democratic leaders, and our committee chairs in crafting a rescue plan whose scope matched the enormity of the economic and public-health crisis we faced.

In that spirit, we look forward to partnering with you to develop and enact as robust and comprehensive a Build Back Better package as possible, building on the Biden Administration's American Jobs Plan and American Families Plan. This initial framework made significant strides toward achieving clean transportation and clean water for all, 100% carbon pollution-free power by 2035, growth in clean manufacturing, protection of our lands, and a robust care economy. President Biden has made a compelling case to the American people that government can and should be a force for good in this country and we agree that bold investments in good-paying union jobs, climate action, and caregiving are essential to uplifting families and building back better.

We believe it is imperative we build on this initial proposal and use this uniquely historic opportunity to harness our governing majorities to decisively tackle the climate crisis; deliver immediate job growth and long-overdue wage growth for American workers; ensure equity and fairness for marginalized communities as part of this economic recovery; and reshape vital

sectors of our economy—such as caregiving, clean energy, and manufacturing—so that they produce good, family-sustaining, union jobs with benefits.

We respectfully wish to share three priorities for your consideration as Congress develops Build Back Better legislation:

Size: We strongly support the president’s previous campaign proposal for health, energy, infrastructure and child-care investments totaling roughly \$7 trillion, including a four-year “\$2 trillion accelerated investment” on climate-focused infrastructure, setting America on “an irreversible course to meet the ambitious climate progress that science demands.”

The initial size of the American Jobs Plan—roughly \$2 trillion over eight years, or 1 percent in annual GDP investments—encompasses both physical infrastructure, caregiving, housing, workforce development, and other vital priorities. But this framework invests half the annual resources originally proposed by President Biden on climate action alone.

President Biden’s original \$7 trillion campaign investments align more closely with the \$9.5 trillion THRIVE Agenda, cosponsored by over 100 members of Congress, to create 15 million good jobs, curb racial inequity, and cut climate pollution in half by 2030—a framework supported by over 250 labor, racial justice and environmental organizations.

Given the success enjoyed by Congress and the White House in passing the overwhelmingly popular American Rescue Plan to direct roughly 9 percent of annual GDP in rapid assistance to the American people, we urge our colleagues to maintain an ambitious infrastructure size.

As a tool for recovery in the wake of the pandemic, public infrastructure—particularly green infrastructure—can “also create millions of jobs directly in the short term and millions more indirectly over a longer period,” according to the International Monetary Fund.

Given the scale of our unemployment, caregiving, health care, climate and inequality crises; the historically low cost to make the necessary investments our country needs; and the singular governing opportunity presented to us, we urge our colleagues in Congress to pursue a larger up-front investment that truly meets this historic moment.

Scope: We appreciate the White House’s interest in reaching across the aisle to seek Republican support for overwhelmingly popular infrastructure priorities to invest in caregiving, workforce development, the environment, housing, and education, and to make the very wealthy and large corporations pay their fair share in taxes to reduce inequality.

While bipartisan support is welcome, the pursuit of Republican votes cannot come at the expense of limiting the scope of popular investments. We note that widespread climate denial among Republican lawmakers poses a threat to the bold, necessary action on climate that President Biden and Congressional Democrats have long championed. Republicans also enacted President Trump’s massive tax giveaway—80 percent of which will flow to the wealthy and large corporations in the long run—and have made it clear that they plan to remain a major obstacle to any opportunities to secure fair, progressive tax revenues to curb income and wealth inequality.

Furthermore, Republicans have consistently opposed the high-road labor and equity standards that President Biden rightly included in the American Jobs Plan to ensure the creation of high-

paying unions jobs with benefits, equitable hiring for women, people of color, and investments in Indigenous and marginalized communities that have endured decades of underinvestment.


On a host of priorities that can be delivered by this Congress, the trade-offs for Republican votes are stark. We ask that you work with the White House to prioritize moving transformative legislation that our voters were promised, and not compromise to conform the scope of our necessary ambition to fit the limited paradigm of legislation that will be acceptable to the Republicans. This may require reforming or even eliminating the Senate filibuster, as well as wielding the full powers available of the presidency, vice presidency, and relevant federal agencies to achieve these goals.

Speed: In light of the urgency to secure a broad-based and equitable economic recovery, as well as the previous unanimity of Congressional Republican opposition to the American Rescue Plan, we believe that robust legislation comprising the American Jobs Plan and American Families Plan must be enacted as rapidly as possible, preferably as a single, ambitious package combining physical and social investments hand in hand.

Physical and human infrastructure needs are inextricably linked. People—especially women and people of color who have suffered disproportionate job losses during this recession—cannot get back to work without childcare, long-term care, paid leave, or investments in education and job retraining. This human infrastructure cannot be secondary to the physical infrastructure needs or languish under Republican obstructionism.

We hope to work with you and our committee chairs to develop a rapid legislative timeline to enact an ambitious and comprehensive proposal before the August recess, including a potential springtime budget resolution to guarantee Congressional action in the event of Republican delays. This will allow us to use the legislative recess to engage with our constituents in our districts to celebrate, highlight, and guide community members through the concrete measures that Congress has enacted. We look forward to meeting our constituents to champion the improvements in their daily lives and strengthen their faith in a government that works for working people, an economy that provides security and opportunity to all, and a planet that their children and grandchildren can enjoy for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Bert Sanders

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator