

April 24, 2020

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

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-230, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

While families and many workers are staying and working from home, there are **millions of workers for whom working remotely or staying in isolation is an impossible luxury. These are our nation's essential workers** who are working on the frontlines of the response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The undersigned organizations represent many of these essential workers that include home care workers, house cleaners, nannies, grocery store workers, food processing workers, farm workers, janitors, airport workers, security guards, child care providers, retail and warehouse workers, fast food workers, telecommunication workers, state and local workers, journalists, and of course healthcare workers. They deliver critical medical care and put food on families' tables. They provide care for the children of other essential workers and vital services to aging adults, people with disabilities in their home and other members of our community. These frontline workers are the backbone of our response to the coronavirus. However, many of these workers engage in this essential work with low wages, without proper safety and job protections, and no job security.

**Essential workers who are on the frontlines of our response to the coronavirus must be included in the next relief package.** We applaud Senator Schumer's proposal to create a 'Heroes' fund to give premium pay to frontline workers and Senator Warren and Representative Khanna's "Essential Workers Bill of Rights." These are important frameworks to build upon to establish robust pay and protections for essential workers in the next relief package.

**We urge Congress to adopt an inclusive definition of who is an essential worker and require premium pay to all essential workers who must go to work during this pandemic. Congress must simultaneously ensure that these workers have healthcare, paid sick days, the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) and health and safety information to do their jobs with as little risk as possible.**

*An Inclusive Definition of Essential Workers*

We urge Congress to adopt a broad definition of essential workers who would be eligible for premium pay and be entitled to additional rights and protections. **An essential worker should be defined as any worker who cannot telework and who must still go to work.**

### *Premium Pay*

**Employers should be required to provide premium pay to all essential workers who should be paid a base living wage.** Premium pay should provide meaningful compensation to essential workers to recognize and value the vital contribution they are making to keep our families and communities healthy and safe during this pandemic. Employers should be prohibited from using premium pay to lower the worker's regular rate of pay or to use it as a substitute for overtime pay to which a worker may be entitled. The premium pay should also not be a substitute for the provision of personal protective equipment, which all employers must be required to provide. The worker's total compensation should not count towards workers' eligibility for any means-tested programs and must be retroactive to the start date of the pandemic.

In cities across the country and on social media, people are praising the essential work these workers are doing and calling them "heroes." We need to treat them like the true heroes they are by properly valuing and compensating them for their work and to provide additional protections to ensure that they have the ability to work safely.

Sincerely,

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees  
American Federation of Teachers  
Atop all Education Association  
Center for Popular Democracy  
Communications Workers of America  
Community Change Action  
Family Values@ Work  
Jobs With Justice  
Justice for Migrant Women  
National Association for the Education of Young Children  
National Domestic Workers Alliance  
National Education Association  
People's Action  
ROC United  
Service Employees International Union  
United for Respect