

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3215

August 10, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

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

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

As members of Congress negotiate an infrastructure package, it is essential to fully fund President Biden's request to allocate a minimum of \$30 billion toward preparing for potential future pandemics. COVID-19 has killed over 600,000 Americans and cost this country \$16 trillion, and experts say that the next pandemic could be right around the corner. Without this critical funding, if another pandemic hit us tomorrow, we could be as ill-prepared as we were for COVID-19.¹ This investment will strengthen our health systems, protect our economy, and potentially save millions of lives.

Preparing for the next pandemic doesn't just protect the economy and save lives - it also advances the fight for racial justice. This pandemic disproportionately affected communities of color and poorer Americans, compounding the economic and social impacts of the pandemic, including food insecurity, housing insecurity, and job and income loss. According to a recent study by the British Medical Journal, Black Americans experienced a 3.25-year decline in life expectancy between 2018 to 2020, while Hispanic Americans saw a 3.88-year decline and white Americans experienced only a 1.36-year decline.^{2,3} Communities of color and low-income Americans cannot afford another pandemic, and we cannot allow unwillingness from Congress to invest in pandemic preparedness to place them at continued risk.

¹Cutler DM, Summers LH. The COVID-19 Pandemic and the \$16 Trillion Virus. *JAMA*. 2020;324(15):1495-1496. doi:10.1001/jama.2020.19759. Available at <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2771764>.

²Woolf S H, Masters R K, Aron L Y. Effect of the covid-19 pandemic in 2020 on life expectancy across populations in the USA and other high income countries: simulations of provisional mortality data *BMJ* 2021; 373: n1343 doi:10.1136/bmj.n1343. Available at <https://www.bmj.com/content/373/bmj.n1343>.

³Allyson Chiu, L. B. (2021, July 21). "Driven by COVID DEATHS, U.S. life expectancy dropped by 1.5 years in 2020." *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/07/21/life-expectancy-covid/>.

Before COVID-19, the United States consistently underinvested in public health and pandemic preparedness. While the funding we have provided in the last year to respond to this pandemic has been incredibly important in mitigating its damage, we must also work to prevent a similar situation from happening again in the future. If we do not make strong investments in pandemic preparedness now, we are likely to face more devastating impacts to our country when the next pandemic arises. The cost of a \$30 billion investment now is nothing compared to the cost of a future pandemic.

According to a recent poll from Data for Progress and Guarding Against Pandemics, 67% of Americans believe that the United States was unprepared for the COVID-19 pandemic and want the United States to be ready for future pandemics.⁴ The poll also found that President Biden's proposal to invest \$30 billion toward pandemic preparedness has the support of 71% of voters, including strong majorities of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans. Congress must deliver for Americans and make these important, popular investments in public health and pandemic preparedness.

I look forward to working together to make these important investments going forward.

Sincerely,



Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

/s/
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

/s/
Alex Padilla
United States Senator

/s/
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

/s/
Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/
John B. Larson
Member of Congress

/s/

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/

David Cicilline
Member of Congress

/s/

Raul Grijalva
Member of Congress

/s/

Jesús G. “Chuy” Garcia
Member of Congress

/s/

André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

/s

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

/s/

Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

/s/

Marie Newman
Member of Congress

/s/

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress