



March 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC. 20510

Dear Senators,

First, I would like to thank you for the swift action already taken by Congress to respond to the coronavirus crisis. The two supplemental appropriations bills already passed by Congress and signed by the president are essential stopgap measures to keep American families and regional economies safe and afloat during these challenging times. JFF applauds the emergency health, food, and unemployment assistance provisions in the bills, as well as their focus on providing paid family leave for individuals adversely impacted by the coronavirus.

While addressing the immediate health and economic emergency is of paramount concern, JFF understands that Congress and the administration are also working on additional legislative packages that could address the continuing fallout we expect from this crisis. We anticipate significant disruptions as employers and workers grapple with uncertainty in the economy, unemployment, and the need to quickly reskill portions of the workforce. In addition, K-12 districts, postsecondary education institutions and students will continue to struggle with the necessary shifts to online learning and interruptions in curriculum delivery and educational pathways.

As you develop additional legislation in response to the economic consequences of the coronavirus, we urge you to give special consideration to those individuals, families, industry sectors, and communities most likely to be affected by extended periods of medical, economic, and social disruption. We are glad to see that policymakers are now considering policy interventions that will alleviate many of the burdens that will fall on individuals and families—but much more needs to be done.

JFF is recommending that Congress take action across several essential areas:

Unemployment expansion and improvement. We recommend that in addition to funding provided in the second coronavirus supplemental appropriation, Congress should further expand and improve unemployment insurance (UI) programs in the United States, by:

- Significantly expanding UI benefits to help the millions of workers whose jobs will be lost or threatened by this crisis

- Implementing innovations such as enhanced reemployment assistance, job sharing, and other evidence-based strategies for helping workers get back to good jobs
- Making immediate changes in how eligibility for UI is determined, at least through this crisis, an extending eligibility to individuals who cannot work as the result of the coronavirus, including individuals who are self-employed or who work in the gig economy

Adequate funding for workforce development services. Many individuals, in addition to those being served by UI, including large numbers of underprepared youth and adults, will need additional assistance to find and prepare for new employment. To meet the increased demand for services in America's workforce development system, we recommend:

- Providing emergency funding of WIOA formula grants and National Emergency Reserve grants to ensure that the system is able to serve consumers, maintain facilities, and provide funds for capacity and professional development for staff to learn how to deliver essential services in new ways
- Relaxing certain requirements, specifically for competitive grant procurement, to allow for state and local boards to build out technology solutions and virtual platforms, expand virtual delivery and provide high-quality virtual services
- Giving authority to local Workforce Development Boards (WDB) to expand the Employment Training Provider List (ETPL) to include online and alternative providers of education and training during the crisis, with assurance that providers' performance is accounted for by the local boards

Safety nets and supports for families. Our nation's poverty alleviation programs help American families receive basic needs assistance and the opportunity to economically advance. In this time, where more and more families are facing financial uncertainty, programs like SNAP and TANF have to be adjusted to respond to the increased need. To ensure families have the safety nets they need, we recommend:

- Providing increased funding for SNAP and TANF to ensure they are meeting demand
- Lifting restrictive work requirements over the course of this crisis
- Increasing funding for education and skills development for public assistance recipients once they are back up and running, so beneficiaries can develop the skills and earn the credentials necessary for family supporting careers.

Relief for students and higher education institutions. To address the concerns of postsecondary students who are threatened with the loss of student aid, educational progress, housing, food assistance among others, we recommend:

- Directing emergency grants to students for food, housing, transportation, childcare, access to technology and other supports
- Making assurances that time out of class will not impact Pell Grant eligibility, student loan repayment, satisfactory progress, or Pell lifetime limits
- Encouraging and removing barriers to models for accelerating learning, including competency education and prior learning assessments, that can help individuals impacted by disruptions in educational delivery effectively and efficiently attain the skills and credentials needed for success

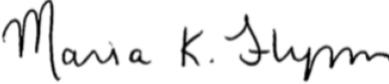
Investments in distance learning capacity. Postsecondary and K-12 education systems across the nation are coping with shifts to online learning. To help systems and districts react to

the coronavirus crisis while also making them more prepared for future disruption, we recommend:

- Providing grants to states, local school systems, and postsecondary institutions that will ensure needed funding for the platforms and staff capacity necessary to implement high-quality, virtual and alternative delivery mechanisms that are necessary for the delivery of curriculum during the health crisis
- Creating a new research fund to support the rapid development, testing, and deployment of new online learning technologies
- Making investments in broadband infrastructure to ensure that all communities, families, and students have adequate bandwidth to access virtual learning

We know there are numerous priorities that must be addressed in the next supplemental responding to the coronavirus. JFF applauds Congress's response to thus far to the coronavirus and looks forward to working with you as you continue to help America successfully navigate this crisis and the anticipated continuing impacts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria K. Flynn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maria Flynn
President and CEO
Jobs for the Future