

April 9, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, Schumer, and McCarthy,

The 157 undersigned organizations, representing millions of patients and consumers from across America, urge Congress to expand eligibility for the paid family and medical leave program to include individuals determined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to be at high risk for adverse complications from COVID-19 and working members of their households. This policy will allow those at highest risk to remain home for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic and will help ensure their health and safety.

Currently, paid family medical leave provides support only to those with children or adults with disabilities whose local school district or usual care providers are closed due to the pandemic. This policy does not go far enough. The hardworking Americans who have been advised by the CDC to remain home are only eligible for up to two weeks of financial support and job protection of expanded paid sick leave. This places individuals who live with significant health conditions such as cystic fibrosis, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, organ transplants, sickle cell and others with a devastating choice: place their health or their loved one's health at risk by going back to work or lose their jobs altogether. Additionally, adults living with family members who are immunocompromised also need access to this support to help protect these vulnerable Americans.

At this time of great uncertainty in our country, it is important to understand that certain individuals are at much higher risk of adverse health events and death associated with COVID-19 than the rest of the population. Although recent research indicates the overall fatality rate from COVID-19 is around 2 percent, individuals with certain health conditions experience a greater rate of severe complications and have higher fatality rates from COVID-19. Research performed by the European Respiratory Society found that<sup>i</sup>:

- patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) have a 25 percent fatality rate
- patients with diabetes have a 10 percent fatality rate
- patients with hypertension have a 10.4 percent fatality rate
- patients with cerebrovascular disease have a 20 percent fatality rate

Further, researchers at Johns Hopkins University have found that patients with cancer have a 5.6 percent fatality rate and those with cardiovascular disease have a 10.5 percent fatality rate.<sup>ii</sup>

These very startling statistics demonstrate why individuals with serious health conditions and other risk factors, as identified by the CDC, and working members of their household should receive job protection

and financial support through paid family leave. We call on Congress to make the following changes to the paid family and medical leave program created in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act:

- Expand eligibility for paid family leave to include anyone who, because of a serious health condition that places them at grave risk from COVID-19, has been advised by their physician to remain home
- Expand eligibility for paid family leave or additional financial support to include anyone who has been advised by a physician to remain home because there is a member of their household who has a serious health condition that places them at grave risk from COVID-19
- Remove the arbitrary time limit on paid leave to ensure that these individuals can remain home as long as the COVID-19 pandemic poses a risk to their health and wellbeing
- Ensure this program applies to employers of all sizes

In this extremely uncertain time for our country, we believe Congress can come together to provide some certainty for Americans who are afraid that their health or the health of a loved one will be placed at risk should they continue to work. We urge Congress to act swiftly to enact these changes.

Sincerely,

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation  
Academy of Oncology Nurse and Patient Navigators  
ACCSES  
Allergy & Asthma Network  
ALS Association  
Alstrom Syndrome International  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association  
American Diabetes Association  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Kidney Fund  
American Liver Foundation  
Angioma Alliance  
Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired  
Association of Oncology Social Work (AOSW)  
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Autistic Women and Nonbinary Network  
Axis Advocacy  
Beyond Type 1  
Brain Injury Association of America  
Bridge the Gap - SYNGAP Education and Research Foundation  
California Access Coalition  
California Chronic Care Coalition  
Dystonia Medical Research Foundation

Caregiver Action Network  
CARES Foundation Inc.  
Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY  
Children's Cancer Cause  
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation  
Chronic Care Policy Alliance  
Chronic Disease Coalition  
Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy and Innovation  
CommunicationFIRST  
Congenital Hyperinsulinism International  
COPD Foundation  
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation  
Cure HHT  
Cure SMA  
CureDuchenne  
Cystic Fibrosis Research, Inc. (CFRI)  
Danielle Byron Henry Migraine Foundation  
Davis Phinney Foundation  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Diabetes Patient Advocacy Coalition (DPAC)  
Disability Rights California  
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund  
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children  
Dystonia Advocacy Network  
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

Epilepsy Foundation  
Family Values @ Work  
Family Voices  
Family Voices NJ  
Fight Colorectal Cancer  
GBS|CIDP Foundation International  
Genetic Alliance  
Global Healthy Living Foundation  
Global Liver Institute  
GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer  
Gould Syndrome Foundation  
Health Hats  
Heart Valve Voice US  
Hemophilia Federation of America  
Hope Charities  
HPV Alliance  
Huntington's Disease Society of America  
Hydrocephalus Association  
International Foundation for AiArthritis  
International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders  
International Pemphigus Pemphigoid Foundation  
Interstitial Cystitis Association  
Lakeshore Foundation  
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society  
Lewy Body Dementia Association  
Livpact  
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.  
Lupus Foundation of America  
Lymphangiomatosis & Gorham's Disease Alliance  
Lymphatic Education & Research Network  
March of Dimes  
Mental Health America  
Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation  
METAvivor  
MLD Foundation  
Multiple Sclerosis Association of America  
Muscular Dystrophy Association  
NAACP New York State Conference  
NASTAD  
National Alliance for Caregiving  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Alopecia Areata Foundation  
The Bonnell Foundation: Living with cystic fibrosis  
The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy and Innovation  
The Headache and Migraine Policy Forum  
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship  
National Down Syndrome Congress  
National Fabry Disease Foundation  
National Health Council  
National Health Law Program  
National Hemophilia Foundation  
National Kidney Foundation  
National MPS Society  
National Multiple Sclerosis Society  
National Organization for Rare Disorders  
National Pancreas Foundation  
National Patient Advocate Foundation  
National Urea Cycle Disorders Foundation  
NBIA Disorders Association  
NephCure Kidney International  
New York Chapter of the National SCDA  
New York State Sickle Cell Advocacy Network  
Organic Acidemia Association  
Paid Leave for the United States (PL+US)  
Patient Advisor  
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association  
Project Sleep  
PTEN Hamartoma Tumor Syndrome Foundation  
PTEN World  
Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation  
Pulmonary Hypertension Association  
PXE International  
RespectAbility  
Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation  
SCID Angels for Life Foundation  
Scleroderma Foundation  
Sickle Cell Thalassemia Patients Network (SCTPN)  
Siegel Rare Neuroimmune Association  
Sjogren's Foundation  
Solve ME/CFS Initiative  
Spina Bifida Association  
Susan G. Komen  
TASH  
The AIDS Institute  
The American Liver Foundation  
The Arc of the United States  
The Marfan Foundation  
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research

The Migraine Diva  
The Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, Inc  
Tourette Association of America  
Transplant Recipients International Organization (TRIO)  
Transplant Support Organization  
Tuberous Sclerosis Alliance  
United Cerebral Palsy National  
United for Charitable Assistance  
United Spinal Association  
United States International Council on Disabilities  
US Hereditary Angioedema Association  
VetsFirst  
VHL Alliance  
Whistleblowers of America  
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease  
ZERO - The End of Prostate Cancer

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<sup>i</sup> <https://erj.ersjournals.com/content/early/2020/03/17/13993003.00547-2020.figures-only>

<sup>ii</sup>

[https://www.hopkinsguides.com/hopkins/view/Johns\\_Hopkins\\_ABX\\_Guide/540747/all/Coronavirus\\_COVID\\_19\\_\\_SARS\\_CoV\\_2\\_](https://www.hopkinsguides.com/hopkins/view/Johns_Hopkins_ABX_Guide/540747/all/Coronavirus_COVID_19__SARS_CoV_2_)