



Jared Golden
Congress of the United States
2nd District of Maine

March 23, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
House of Representatives
H-107, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
H-307, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Hoyer, and Chairwoman Lowey:

As you work with Senate leadership and the Trump Administration on an economic relief package to address the effects of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), I write to follow up on a letter I sent last Friday with Congresswoman Pingree, where we laid out areas of top concern based upon feedback from Mainers. I write today to lay out additional, more specific actions I believe Congress should take to best respond to the needs of American families and businesses impacted by the health crisis facing our nation. My recommendations are informed by feedback that I have heard from individuals, small businesses, and communities across Maine's Second Congressional District over the past week.

Because the current economic downturn is rooted in a public health crisis, in the coming days our primary efforts must be to contain, control, and treat the spread of the virus. To that end, any major economic relief package should:

- Supply sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) to enable COVID-19 mitigation, testing, and treatment by the full range of medical and group living facilities.
- Ensure sufficient supplies of COVID-19 test kits and testing reagents.
- Maintain health care providers' financial balance by stabilizing and expanding existing funding streams – including by further increasing the Medicaid Federal Medical Assistance Percentage, reauthorizing the Community Health Center program, and

providing grant aid to backfill providers' lost revenues from the state-requested cancellation of elective procedures and non-emergency appointments.

Maine small businesses are already suffering. Some have already shuttered their doors and many more are teetering at the edge of closure, hoping that Congress will take action to address the painful economic effects of the pandemic. I believe our efforts must be squarely focused on giving Main Street a fighting chance. In addition to the proposals I outlined in my Friday letter regarding zero-interest, zero-fee loans, I also believe that our small business provisions should:

- Streamline the approval process for these loans and defer repayment for a year.
- Increase funding for SBA resource partners, like Small Business Development Centers.
- Defer payments on existing SBA and USDA loans to small businesses and nonprofits.

Folks in Maine are also deeply concerned about the immediate impact of an economic downturn on working-class families, the elderly, and other vulnerable members of our community. That's why we must prioritize policies that give particular support to these populations. Our efforts should include:

- Providing every low-income and working-class American with immediate cash assistance to meet basic needs, with a hold-harmless provision for people receiving means-tested benefits.
- Require lenders to provide interest-free consumer debt forbearance for the duration of the public health emergency, including preventing repossessions, foreclosures, utility disconnections, and reporting of past due debt to credit agencies.
- Providing flexible funding for service providers to meet increased demands within the domains eligible for funding from the Community Services Block Grant, the Low-Income Heating Assistance Program, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, nutrition programs, and housing programs. Providers are currently improvising to address community needs amidst the pandemic, and they need to be able to combine funding streams and shoulder additional transportation costs.
- Increasing homeless service provider funding through the Emergency Solutions Grant and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families grant.
- Renewing Housing Choice Voucher funds at the \$1 billion level to help protect both low-income tenants and their landlords from hardship related to COVID-19.

Finally, Maine workers and our state's resource-based economy are facing particular challenges that the federal government is uniquely positioned to address. Based on their feedback, I would also like to see that a relief package accomplish the following:

- Provide financial assistance to charter, commercial, and tribal fishery participants affected by COVID-19, including fishing communities, shellfish aquaculture businesses, processors or other fishery-related businesses who have incurred revenue losses.
- Establish an insurance relief program to help offset the costs of insurance on working waterfront infrastructure, boats, businesses, and to stabilize seafood supply chain business.
- Establish a workplace safety standard to protect front-line workers and other at-risk workers from infectious diseases - firefighters, police officers, paramedics, and nurses.
- Expand Unemployment Insurance and increase benefits by at least \$50-\$75 per week, with the benefit increase fully funded by the federal government.
- Increase federal funding for the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration Dislocated Worker Grant programs.
- Provide time-limited but mandatory paid sick leave for workplaces with fewer than 50 employees and businesses with over 500 employees. The federal government should pick up the full tab of expanded leave for businesses with fewer than 50 employees during this time of public health crisis.

I am grateful for your leadership as we navigate this unprecedented and challenging time for our nation. I stand ready to work with you to ensure that we are helping those families and businesses most in need of support.

Sincerely,



Jared F. Golden
Member of Congress