



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

April 8, 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 James Clyburn
House of Representatives
H-329, 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, Whip Clyburn, and Chairwoman Lowey:

As Congress considers enacting a fourth phase of COVID-19 response legislation, I am writing to share feedback that I have received from my constituents about how we should best address the continuing public health and economic impacts of this pandemic. While I believe that Congress must maintain a strong focus on overseeing the implementation of the first three phases of relief, I would like to highlight a few key provisions as we plan for further action: additional financial support for rural hospitals and health care providers, a substantial increase in resources for small business relief programs, and continued distribution of aid - through both unemployment compensation and individual rebates - to the American people for the duration of this public health emergency.

First, rural health care providers are currently experiencing tremendous financial pressures related to COVID-19 as they prepare for peak levels of demand for their personal protective equipment (PPE), staff capacity, and beds. Per guidance from the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services and from the Centers for Disease Control, hospitals and other health care providers are cancelling or postponing many elective procedures in order to preserve limited supplies of PPE and to reduce the opportunity for transmission of COVID-19 within health care facilities. This course of action will remain necessary for the indefinite duration of the public health emergency, given that PPE supplies remain constrained, threatening to create shortages in the coming weeks and months absent significant actions by providers. To prevent rural health

care providers from becoming insolvent in the midst of a pandemic, Congress must provide additional aid through the Health Resources and Services Administration's Rural Health account. We should also modify further rounds of provider aid via the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund to specify that a portion of the funding be allocated by a formula that sets aside 20 percent of the funding for rural facilities and that accounts for revenue losses resulting from prudent provider actions to preserve PPE and other resources.

Second, it is clear from the strong demand for small business relief through the SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan program and the SBA Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) that Congress must provide additional resources for this aid and for SBA administrative expenses above and beyond what is currently being proposed. My state of Maine has already seen over 1,800 applications for over \$510 million in the program's first four days. Although ongoing discussions about additional funding for the program are reportedly targeting approximately \$250 billion, I believe that amount would likely be insufficient. Congress's next appropriation for the PPP should double the program's current funding level and include a set-aside for lenders serving rural small businesses in order to meet the full demand for small business aid during this economic disruption. Congress should also account for the potential continuation of economic disruptions beyond June 30 and the possibility that the PPP should be extended accordingly. The PPP shows promise to help small businesses keep their enterprises intact and their employees on payroll for the duration of the public health emergency. But it will only function as designed if every qualifying small business can benefit from this program.

Third, Congress should authorize a second round of direct relief payments to every low-income and working-class American. This crisis is far from over, as is the need to support families across the country whose lives and livelihoods have been upended by this crisis. The level of relief in this second round of direct payments should be no lower than in the first round and steps should be taken to hasten the delivery of payments. If additional administrative resources would assist the Treasury Department in speeding processing times for mailed payments, Congress should provide such funding. Further, Congress should consider an automatic trigger for continuing payments based on economic conditions, to reduce the chance that necessary relief could be interrupted by inaction on the part of Congress or the president.

Lastly, the Phase IV legislation should further enhance the unemployment programs that were created under the *CARES Act*. Specifically, we should work to extend the sunset of the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) by tying it to certain economic conditions that indicate a recovery of the job market, as it will likely take months after the crisis for businesses to open and make enough money to rehire to pre-COVID levels. With the unemployment rate expected to exceed ten percent in the coming weeks, the July 31, 2020 termination of the FPUC program will likely result in tens of thousands of Americans struggling to make ends meet until they are able to secure employment.

Thank you for considering this feedback as you prepare for discussions on structuring a fourth phase of assistance to health care providers, businesses, and individuals amidst this ongoing public health and economic emergency. I look forward to continuing to work with you and with my colleagues to oversee the implementation of the first three phases of aid and to apply lessons from that legislation to the development of future relief packages to protect our nation's health and economic well-being.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jared F. Golden", is written over a horizontal line.

Jared F. Golden
Member of Congress