



## Congress Passes COVID Relief: A Summary of the Legislation & Where it Falls Short

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After months of stalemates and negotiations, Congress has finally passed much needed COVID relief legislation. The following is a summary of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. Analyses of specific provisions will be provided in the weeks ahead as we learn more.

### **Direct economic relief for families**

- Unemployment insurance - an additional \$300 per week thru March, 21, 2020
- Direct payments - \$600 per person including dependent children
- Retroactive CARES Act fix for mixed status families with one SSN spouse in form of refundable credit when next year's tax returns are filed.

### **Vaccines, testing and tracing, community health and health care provider support**

- \$20B for vaccine procurement
- \$9B to Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and states for vaccine distribution
  - o \$300M directly to high risk underserved areas, including communities of color
- \$22B directly to states for testing and tracing
  - o \$2.5B targeted at needs in underserved areas including communities of color and rural communities
- \$4.5B for mental health funding
- \$9B in support for health care providers
- \$1B to National Institute of Health (NIH) for COVID research

### **Schools**

- \$4.05B-Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund
  - o Includes a set aside for services to private K-12 schools to be administered by public agencies.
- \$54.3 billion: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (Public K-12 schools)
- \$22.7 billion: Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund
  - o \$20 billion distributed to all public and private non-profit institutions of higher education



- \$908 million to for-profit colleges to provide financial aid grants to students.
- \$1.7 billion: set-asides for HBCUs, tribal colleges, and Minority-Serving Institutions and
- \$113.5 million for institutions with the greatest unmet needs or those not served by the primary formula, such as independent graduate schools.

### **Rental Assistance**

- \$25B: emergency federal rental assistance program to be distributed by state and local governments. Assistance can cover up to 12 months of back and forward rent, with an additional three months in certain cases;
- The CDC's eviction moratorium will be extended one month to Jan. 31, giving the Biden Administration time to implement additional protections for at-risk tenants;
- Households below 80 percent area median income (AMI) are eligible for rental assistance funds if they qualified for unemployment insurance or experienced reduced household income or financial hardship due to the pandemic; and are at risk of homelessness or housing instability;
- States and localities must prioritize households below 50 percent of AMI or those who have been unemployed for 90 days;
- It also includes an extension of the existing CDC eviction moratorium through January 31, 2021.
- *Ohio's share of the total \$25 billion will be approximately \$778.1 million. Cities and counties with populations over 200,000 will receive a direct allocation.*

### **Nutrition**

- Boosts the SNAP maximum benefit by 15 percent for six months (through June 30, 2021), expands SNAP benefits and eligibility for some unemployed individuals and college students, provides administrative funds to states to keep SNAP benefits flowing to needy households
- \$13 billion for direct payments, purchases and loans to farmers and ranchers who have suffered losses due to the pandemic. It also includes funds to support the food supply chain through food purchases, donations to food banks, and support for local food systems.
- Expands the Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program for children under six-years-old, a program offering a lifeline that fills nutrition needs when child care is closed due to COVID-19 and gives states some additional flexibilities to support the distribution of P-EBT benefits to school-age children



- Establishes a task force to support online delivery systems for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

### **Child Care**

- \$10 billion in emergency funds for the child care sector
- *Ohio is expected to receive \$336,390,480*
- \$250 million for Head Start providers to ensure they are able to continue to safely serve low income children and families throughout the pandemic.

### **Child Welfare**

- The bill also includes the Supporting Foster Youth & Families through the Pandemic Act (H.R. 7947), which includes the following provisions:
- Provides \$350M for the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee) and an additional \$50M for Chafee Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) and also waiving the state match;
- Allows older youth "aging out" of foster care to continue to receive foster care supports and services during the pandemic;
- Waives the state match for Family First Prevention Services until the end of the public emergency health period; and
- Provides an additional \$85M in FY 2021 funding for the **MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families** program which provides states with funding for community-based family support and prevention services.

### **Broadband**

- \$3.2 billion in emergency funds for low-income families to access broadband through an FCC fund.
- \$1 billion tribal broadband fund.
- \$250 million dollars in telehealth funding
- \$65 million to complete the broadband maps in order for the government to effectively disperse funding to the areas that need it most
- \$2 billion to small telecommunication providers to rip out Huawei/ZTE(Chinese) equipment to replace it with secure equipment
- \$300 million grant program to fund broadband in rural areas.



### Miscellaneous Provisions

- **Coronavirus Relief Fund Extension:** This bill extends the availability by one year (until Dec. 31, 2021) for funds provided to states and localities by the Coronavirus Relief Fund in the CARES Act
- **Special “lookback” for EITC and CTC:** The bill includes a special temporary rule allowing lower-income individuals to use their earned income from tax year 2019 to determine the Earned Income Tax Credit and the refundable portion of the Child Tax Credit (i.e., the Additional Child Tax Credit) in the 2020 tax year. This will help workers who experienced lower wages this year, due to the pandemic, to get a larger refund that is consistent with their earnings from prior filing seasons.

## Where this package falls short

This federal legislation is much needed and will bring relief to families and children – especially the 8 million people across the United States who have slipped into poverty since this pandemic began. However, it falls short in a number of areas that must be addressed in a subsequent bill to avert needless suffering and prepare our communities and our state for a robust recovery.

**It fails to provide much-needed aid to state and local governments.** Without additional support, we will continue to see lawmakers make damaging cuts to essential local services like education and health care and lay off teachers, firefighters, and other public employees, all of which will hurt our communities and take money out of local economies at the worst possible time.

**The agreement extends relief too briefly.** It includes just a one-month extension of the eviction moratorium, extends jobless benefits only through mid-March, and increases SNAP benefits for just six months.

**Child care relief is insufficient and continues to put our system at risk.** The bill provides \$10B for child care. This new infusion of federal dollars comes on top of the \$3.5 billion in relief for child care provided by the CARES Act in the spring. This additional funding still falls far short of the more than \$50 billion the sector needs to survive the pandemic. Without this additional support, our nation runs the risk of exacerbating the child care crisis that existed long before the pandemic, making it harder for parents to work, leaving children without critical supports



for their health and wellbeing, and jeopardizing the livelihoods of early childhood educators—disproportionately women of color and immigrant women.

**Sick leave must be extended beyond this pandemic to employees when they need it.** While the deal extends tax credits for businesses that provide paid leave, it fails to extend people's right to take that leave when they get sick, have to take care of a loved one, or balance work and caregiving needs when schools are closed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.