



May 13, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We write with deep concern for the millions of essential frontline workers, like those we hope to include in a Heroes Fund, who, in the face of this pernicious pandemic, continue treating patients, stocking grocery store shelves, filling prescriptions, and responding to medical calls. The risks they have been forced to take entitles them to the full support of the federal government. Therefore, as we continue working on future legislation to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, we encourage the creation of a federal program to reimburse essential workers for costs that enable them to stay on the job and perform their jobs safely and arise out of their current, ongoing emergency needs during this pandemic, including any related to a COVID-19 diagnosis. This fund should provide support for and include coverage of medical costs, mental health care costs, childcare costs, transportation, temporary housing, and compensation for the significant, lasting pain and suffering that comes from serving on the frontlines of this pandemic, including a COVID-19 diagnosis.

Essential frontline workers have been holding our nation together since the start of this pandemic – putting their own fears aside to keep Americans safe, healthy, and fed each day. Unfortunately, far too many have already had their worst fear realized and have been diagnosed with COVID-19. For many essential frontline workers, especially low-wage workers, this diagnosis and the financial ramifications that may come with it – medical costs, childcare costs, alternative housing costs, and lost wages – are devastating. Regardless of a diagnosis, the costs associated with these types of emergency needs are overwhelmingly burdensome for essential frontline workers. Possibly even more difficult will be the psychological impact that working on the frontlines, only to be diagnosed with COVID-19, will bring. While we must continue working towards long-term solutions to protect all workers, it is clear that this emergency situation requires an emergency solution for essential frontline workers.

Consequently, we are proposing the creation of a federal program within the U.S. Department of Labor that will administer a new federal fund to reimburse essential frontline workers for expenses incurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, or as a result of diagnosis and treatment. Essential frontline workers eligible for this reimbursement should include, at a minimum, health care workers (including the janitors, cleaning staff, and food service employees working in health care, in-home, and community settings), first responders (including volunteers), sanitation workers, transportation workers, grocery store pharmacy employees, domestic workers, farmworkers, and other workers whose work or workplace are deemed essential by federal, state, and local governments. Further, the reimbursements should cover costs incurred while being treated for COVID-19, as well as any future costs incurred, including, but not limited to, medical costs, mental health care costs, alternative housing costs, childcare costs, and lost wages. Finally, in certain instances, funding should be made available for essential frontline workers for the pain and suffering incurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and should supplement, not supplant, funds distributed through a Heroes Fund.

Since the start of this crisis, essential frontline workers have been given our deepest thanks and loudest applause. Together, we have celebrated their quiet and resilient heroism in the face of an uncertain and unprecedented national crisis. Now, we must make good on our promise that we stand with them and have their backs. We must compensate them for the sacrifices they have made, and continue to make each day, to keep our national healthy, safe, fed, and moving forward. We must create a national Essential Frontline Worker Compensation Fund. We look forward to working with you to move this priority.

Sincerely,

[/s/ Richard Blumenthal](#)

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate

[/s/ Tammy Duckworth](#)

TAMMY DUCKWORTH
United States Senate

[/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand](#)

KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senate

[/s/ Kamala D. Harris](#)

KAMALA D. HARRIS
United States Senate

[/s/ Bernard Sanders](#)

BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senate