

Senators Capito and Manchin,

Across West Virginia, [food and housing insecurity](#) are growing, [local governments](#) are facing budget crises that threaten public services, and [unemployed workers](#) are struggling to make ends meet as the economic and health crisis rages on. Despite these challenges, Congress has failed to pass any meaningful COVID relief for families and communities since March, and most of the programs that were passed have since expired with the crisis no less challenging. We, the undersigned organizations, call on our United States Senators to fulfill their duty to the people of West Virginia and the nation by immediately passing a desperately needed COVID relief package prior to adjourning this month until after the election.

Since May, the United States Senate has had in their possession the House of Representatives-passed HEROES Act which would provide critical support to families and communities suffering hardship from the health and economic impacts of the pandemic. Leadership of the Senate have refused to act on that legislation, and instead, recently voted on a so-called 'skinny' bill that did nothing to address the immediate issues of spiking food and housing insecurity, lack of health care access, and threats to public services provided by local governments around the country due to severe budget shortfalls.

We commend Senator Joe Manchin for voting against the "skinny" package last week in addition to immediately calling for his colleagues on both sides of the aisle to work together, as they did in March of this year, to pass a relief package that addresses the critical needs of the millions of Americans struggling with the realities of the pandemic-driven recession.

We were disappointed to see Senator Shelley Moore Capito vote in favor of the 'skinny' bill and call on her to leverage her power as a member of the majority Republican caucus to work with Congressional Democrats and the White House to come up with a bipartisan package that can gain enough support to be signed into law and that meets the significant needs of this moment. Such a package must include the following:

- An extension of the \$600/weekly federal Unemployment Insurance benefits and of the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation program so that unemployed workers will be eligible for continued weekly benefits as the unemployment remains high;
- A 15 percent increase in maximum SNAP benefits and reauthorization of Pandemic EBT;
- Funding for child care centers to remain open and help for families struggling to afford the cost of child care;
- Increased rental and housing assistance for those struggling with housing insecurity;
- An emergency fund for states to help people who are falling through the cracks and to create subsidized jobs programs when workers can participate safely; and
- Additional, temporary federal funding for Medicaid programs and direct grants to states, territories, and tribes to protect core public services such as education, infrastructure, and first-responders, in addition to aid for local governments.

West Virginia faces a unique and ongoing threat due to COVID-19. We have the [highest percentage](#) of adults in the country who are at risk of severe complications due to COVID-19 due to underlying medical conditions along with one of the highest [virus transmission rates](#) in the country. Our people are also suffering the economic consequences of the pandemic recession, with the [highest percentage](#) of people under threat of eviction in the nation.

The time for meaningful action by the United States Senate is now and failing to act is not an option. COVID is a bigger threat today than when the U.S. Senate acted in March with overwhelming bipartisan support to pass a first round of relief. An additional package now is necessary to help our families and communities recover. Please do not leave Washington without agreeing to a package that can garner enough support to pass the U.S. Senate and House and be signed into law.

Signed,

West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy
National Association of Social Workers West Virginia Chapter
American Friends Service Committee WV Program
American Civil Liberties Union of West Virginia
Charleston Branch NAACP
West Virginia Education Association
West Virginia Citizen Action Group
Tuesday Morning Group
Team for West Virginia Children
Mountain State Justice
American Federation of Teachers-West Virginia
Our Future WV
West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition
WV Foster, Adoptive, & Kinship Parents Network
Planned Parenthood South Atlantic
WVU Food Justice Lab
Jefferson County NAACP