

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 8, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Sent Electronically

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

Thank you for your leadership as our nation continues to address the unprecedented challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, thank you for ensuring the swift passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act.

As members of the For Country Caucus – a politically and geographically diverse group of lawmakers who have served in the United States Armed Forces – we are committed to advancing bipartisan policies that promote national unity, ensure national security, and safely reignite the American economy.

Now more than ever, Americans must bond together against a common enemy and support our friends, neighbors, and communities. In order to protect public health, reopen businesses, reemploy workers, and return students to school – federal, state, and local governments must implement evidence-based, scientific strategies that combat and contain COVID-19, as well as mitigate the adverse impacts endured by individuals and businesses across the country.

As debate on further Congressional action continues, the For Country Caucus respectfully provides the following bipartisan policy proposals for consideration. America's defense communities and states stand ready to lead. Let us provide them the resources to do so.

- **Support State and Local Governments.** Allow state, local, and tribal government entities to access funds previously appropriated by Congress to offset lost revenues.
- **Frontline Responder Support.** Authorize and appropriate robust funding to incentivize and ensure adequate health care personnel are available to combat COVID-19, including providing for emergency license renewals for former health care workers for the duration of the national public health emergency; directing Health and Human Services (HHS) to create a hotline and website to serve as a single-point intake for former health care workers looking to volunteer; directing HHS to work directly with state departments of

public health to coordinate the deployment of volunteers based on local demand signals; and directing HHS to coordinate with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Defense (DOD), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to deploy volunteers to support federal COVID-19 response actions.

- **National Guard Local Response Resources and Supplemental Benefits.** Authorize and appropriate robust funding in support of Army and Air National Guard local response efforts – including, but not limited to, medical augmentation, food distribution operations, transportation support, and personal protective equipment training and delivery. Provide supplemental benefit to Army and Air National Guard personnel to alleviate the decrease in their regular civilian earnings incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic response.
- **National Public Health Corps.** Authorize the creation of a National Public Health Corps within the Corporation for National and Community Service. This program should be similar to FEMA Corps, though the primary partner agency would be the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and these national service members should be assigned to state and local public health department and encouraged to conduct contact tracing and other work related to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP).** Authorize and appropriate robust funding for DCIP to bolster partnerships between the DOD and state and local governments to address off-base infrastructure requirements directly affecting the value and resiliency of defense installations and local jobs impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA).** Authorize and appropriate robust funding for OEA's Industry Resilience Assistance Program to provide state and local governments the resources required to assist the national security innovation base, including manufacturers and supply chain service providers, navigate disruptions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Improve Servicemember Access to Medicine.** Eliminate TRICARE beneficiary copays on mail order prescriptions during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Veterans True Choice.** Allow service-connected veterans in priority groups 1-3 with more health care options by providing the choice to use TRICARE Select and TRICARE for Life during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Designate a National Suicide Hotline.** Designate 9-8-8 as the three-digit number for a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline. The creation of this three-digit dialing code is essential to address the growing suicide crisis across the United States and save the lives of many vulnerable Americans who are facing mental health emergencies during this period of isolation and uncertainty.
- **Maritime Program enhancements.** Allow maritime union vocational training facilities to be eligible for the Paycheck Protection Program and reject Jones Act waivers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Reduce Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Dependence on Foreign Ingredients.** Direct the DOD to determine the extent of its dependency on foreign entities for drugs and restore the consideration of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients for Buy American Act's determinations for DOD and VA purchases.

- **Ban the Investment of Thrift Savings Plan funds in Securities Listed on Mainland Chinese Exchanges.** Prevent the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board from steering federal retirement savings to China.

As the country faces its most serious public health emergency in recent history, let us come together to serve our fellow Americans, support our local communities, and ensure an expeditious resolution to this global threat.

Thank you for your consideration of these proposals.

Sincerely,



JIMMY PANETTA
Member of Congress



DON BACON
Member of Congress



CHRISSY HOULAHAN
Member of Congress



MICHAEL WALTZ
Member of Congress

/s/
JIM BAIRD
Member of Congress

/s/
SALUD O. CARBAJAL
Member of Congress

/s/
GILBERT R. CISNEROS, JR.
Member of Congress

/s/
JASON CROW
Member of Congress

/s/
MIKE GALLAGHER
Member of Congress

/s/
JARED GOLDEN
Member of Congress

/s/
CONOR LAMB
Member of Congress

/s/
ELAINE G. LURIA
Member of Congress

/s/
BRIAN MAST
Member of Congress

/s/
SETH MOULTON
Member of Congress

/s/
DENVER RIGGLEMAN
Member of Congress

/s/
MAX ROSE
Member of Congress

/s/
MIKIE SHERRILL
Member of Congress

/s/
W. GREGORY STEUBE
Member of Congress

/s/
VAN TAYLOR
Member of Congress