



The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate

April 27, 2020

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

Bread for the World applauds the efforts Congress and the administration have made in the past few weeks to meet the immediate needs of people who are experiencing the worst impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, both here in the United States and globally.

The recently passed Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act includes funding for a robust nationwide testing initiative as well as funding to help minority-owned small businesses survive the sudden-onset economic crisis. While we are grateful for these provisions, we are extremely disappointed that the legislation did NOT include an increase in the SNAP maximum monthly benefit. This increase is needed both to help families buy food and to support the economy at a time when tens of millions have lost their jobs because of the global pandemic.

Bread's members include individuals, church denominations, and organizations that are called by Jesus to care for those in need. We are on the frontlines every day providing care and assistance. Now is a time when the federal government needs to continue to exercise leadership and provide broad systemic assistance to help everyone overcome the economic and personal devastation caused by the pandemic.

Bread for the World urges Congress to enact legislation that takes a comprehensive approach to the economic impacts of the pandemic. The entire country and every individual are going through the pandemic together, and the recovery must also be planned and implemented in a systematic way. Enabling parents and caregivers to access the resources they need to put food on the table, including a well-paying job, is the only way to slow the surge of hunger that is overtaking our country.

**Food Assistance in the United States:** The closure of schools and community organizations has left millions of children without access to nutritious foods, as they may have received their only nutritious meals from these sources. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the most cost-effective anti-hunger program in the United States and has the added benefit of supporting small businesses.

**Working in coalition with Bread members, our partners, and other grassroots leaders, Bread urges that future legislation:**

- Increase the maximum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit by 15 percent, which will help families buy food for the entire month.
- Raise the minimum SNAP benefit from \$16 to \$30.
- Suspend all SNAP rule changes and work requirements indefinitely.
- Extend the Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program through the summer months.
- Include a provision that legally expands the USDA online-SNAP purchasing pilot program to all states and U.S. territories.
- Remove USDA administrative burdens that delay the approval process of state SNAP and child nutrition waivers and P-EBT plans.
- Assist state and local governments in centralizing and widely distributing information about schools, school districts, and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) sites that offer meals during school closures.
- Robustly fund food assistance for Puerto Rico and the other territories.

**Public health systems to open the economy:** A job is always the best way to put food on the table, and many lower-income Americans are now desperate to get back to work. In order to open the economy and enable it to stay open, the country needs a mass testing system for both COVID-19 infection and immunity as well as funding to support contact tracing at the local level. Without these public health systems, it appears likely that infections will reach unthinkable levels. The economy will be even more severely disrupted if large numbers of businesses open, only to be forced to close again.

**International Assistance:** The COVID-19 pandemic now affects virtually every country, including developing countries. U.S. leadership is critical to preventing death and severe illness on a devastating scale in countries with few resources for a response. We appreciate the international funding included in earlier supplemental legislation, and we urge Congress to continue to provide flexible funding to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of State.

Past experience tells us that this global health crisis will become a global hunger crisis unless we act quickly. A recent report from the World Food Programme shows that COVID-19 impacts could cause the number of people suffering from extreme hunger to nearly double by the end of 2020, to 265 million.

Malnutrition is a major cause of death among children around the world. Of all deaths among children younger than 5, approximately 45 percent is attributable to malnutrition—either acute malnutrition or increased vulnerability to infections and other illnesses caused by malnutrition. COVID-19 is an immediate, urgent danger to global child survival. As hospitals and local health centers fill beyond capacity, access to treatment for malnutrition is likely to be jeopardized.

With the virus now spreading in low-resource contexts and new waves of infection expected in the coming year, better nutrition for vulnerable people in the poorest countries—nutrition that provides the best possible immunity and strengthens resilience—is more important than ever.

**Working in coalition with Bread members, our partners, and other grassroots leaders, Bread urges that the next legislative package provide no less than \$12 billion for the U.S. global response.** It should include:

- At least **\$5 billion** for emergency economic relief and humanitarian assistance. This would include flexible funding through the Economic Support Fund and International Disaster Assistance to meet immediate humanitarian needs, and funding for Feed the Future's programs that shore up food systems and strengthen social protection programs for vulnerable rural households.
- At least **\$4 billion** for USAID global health programs, to support global health security, COVID-19 testing, vaccine development, and health system strengthening efforts. Nutrition services should be rapidly integrated into ongoing USAID global health programs and applicable emergency programs that are designed for mothers and children. Specifically, programs should scale up the "Power 4" set of effective nutrition interventions: treatment or preventive treatment of children affected by wasting, multiple micronutrient supplementation for mothers, adequate breast feeding/complementary feeding for infants, and Vitamin A supplementation for children.
- **Allocate significant funds** to the Food for Peace account and allow flexibility for local and regional purchase, pre-positioning food assistance near where it is likely to be needed, and targeted cash payments. Programs should ensure a reliable supply chain for specialized nutritious foods, add additional food distribution points, and strengthen national safety net systems equipped to respond to shocks such as this.
- **Allow flexible funding** for the McGovern-Dole program so that programs already in place can support governments in providing meals to children outside school.

In addition to bilateral aid, continued U.S. support for multilateral organizations is critical. This includes funding for the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the African Development Bank, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development . A comprehensive COVID-19 response effort must include health, economic support, agriculture, and social protection.

**Assistance to Immigrants and Their Families:** Congress must ensure that everyone impacted by the pandemic, regardless of immigration status, has access to basic services. In addition, legislation must protect people detained in immigration facilities. **Working in coalition with Bread members, our partners, and other grassroots leaders, Bread urges that future legislation:**

- Permanently suspend the implementation of the recently enacted Public Charge rule.
- Protect detained immigrants from COVID-19 by releasing them to return to their families in the United States.
- Include people who file their tax returns using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) in the stimulus-funded cash payments if they are otherwise eligible, and provide an option allowing eligible people who are not required to file a tax return to receive cash payments.

**Assistance to Populations at Higher Risk:** As the pandemic continues, it becomes increasingly evident that low-income families and people of color, particularly African Americans and Latino/as, are at higher risk both of contracting COVID-19, and of dying if they have the virus. The causes of these disparities include less access to high-quality health insurance and medical care, higher rates of underlying health

conditions, and higher rates of employment in environments that increase the risk of exposure to the virus.

Now is the time to respond to these inequities with systemic change. **Working in coalition with Bread members, our partners, and other grassroots leaders, Bread urges Congress to enact legislation that:**

- Extends the paid sick leave mandated by the Families First Act to workers employed by companies with 500 or more employees, as well as to healthcare providers and first responders.
- Requires states to report infection and death data by race. This will contribute to better understanding of the impact of the pandemic on various groups and help shape future initiatives in ways that reduce systemic inequities, such as those based on race, gender, and socioeconomic status. With this data on hand, testing, treatment and prevention programs must be aligned and implemented in a manner that responds to these needs.

Communities of color and lower-income communities often have disproportionately high rates of incarceration. People of all races and classes who have been released from incarceration faced many barriers to successfully rejoining their communities, even before a global pandemic plunged the country into an economic crisis. **Working in coalition with Bread members, our partners, and other grassroots leaders, Bread urges Congress to enact legislation that:**

- Repeals or waives all restrictions that make individuals with criminal records ineligible for federally funded COVID-19 benefits and support (including SNAP, housing subsidies, and other programs that meet basic needs), or that prevent them from working in certain jobs.
- Funds comprehensive social support programs to help adults and youth released from custody successfully return to a safe home environment.

Through the voices of the prophets in our scriptures, God calls us to care for widows, for orphans, for sojourners—the most vulnerable among us. We, too, are called by God to care for the most vulnerable people and communities—those hit hardest by the pandemic. We, therefore, urge policymakers to hear this call and take decisive action to make these communities a priority in future legislation.

We thank you for your leadership during this difficult time. We join you in prayer for those who are hungry, those who are sick, those doing essential work, and those on the frontlines of the pandemic response.

Please contact Heather Valentine ([Hvalentine@bread.org](mailto:Hvalentine@bread.org)) or Ryan Quinn ([rquinn@bread.org](mailto:rquinn@bread.org)) if Bread can answer any questions or provide assistance.

With you in prayer,



David Beckmann  
President