

April 9, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Leader
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer, Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, Schumer, and McCarthy,

The 157 undersigned organizations, representing millions of patients and consumers from across America, urge Congress to expand eligibility for the paid family and medical leave program to include individuals determined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to be at high risk for adverse complications from COVID-19 and working members of their households. This policy will allow those at highest risk to remain home for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic and will help ensure their health and safety.

Currently, paid family medical leave provides support only to those with children or adults with disabilities whose local school district or usual care providers are closed due to the pandemic. This policy does not go far enough. The hardworking Americans who have been advised by the CDC to remain home are only eligible for up to two weeks of financial support and job protection of expanded paid sick leave. This places individuals who live with significant health conditions such as cystic fibrosis, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, organ transplants, sickle cell and others with a devastating choice: place their health or their loved one's health at risk by going back to work or lose their jobs altogether. Additionally, adults living with family members who are immunocompromised also need access to this support to help protect these vulnerable Americans.

At this time of great uncertainty in our country, it is important to understand that certain individuals are at much higher risk of adverse health events and death associated with COVID-19 than the rest of the population. Although recent research indicates the overall fatality rate from COVID-19 is around 2 percent, individuals with certain health conditions experience a greater rate of severe complications and have higher fatality rates from COVID-19. Research performed by the European Respiratory Society found thatⁱ:

- patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) have a 25 percent fatality rate
- patients with diabetes have a 10 percent fatality rate
- patients with hypertension have a 10.4 percent fatality rate
- patients with cerebrovascular disease have a 20 percent fatality rate

Further, researchers at Johns Hopkins University have found that patients with cancer have a 5.6 percent fatality rate and those with cardiovascular disease have a 10.5 percent fatality rate.ⁱⁱ

These very startling statistics demonstrate why individuals with serious health conditions and other risk factors, as identified by the CDC, and working members of their household should receive job protection

and financial support through paid family leave. We call on Congress to make the following changes to the paid family and medical leave program created in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act:

- Expand eligibility for paid family leave to include anyone who, because of a serious health condition that places them at grave risk from COVID-19, has been advised by their physician to remain home
- Expand eligibility for paid family leave or additional financial support to include anyone who has been advised by a physician to remain home because there is a member of their household who has a serious health condition that places them at grave risk from COVID-19
- Remove the arbitrary time limit on paid leave to ensure that these individuals can remain home as long as the COVID-19 pandemic poses a risk to their health and wellbeing
- Ensure this program applies to employers of all sizes

In this extremely uncertain time for our country, we believe Congress can come together to provide some certainty for Americans who are afraid that their health or the health of a loved one will be placed at risk should they continue to work. We urge Congress to act swiftly to enact these changes.

Sincerely,

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation	Caregiver Action Network
Academy of Oncology Nurse and Patient Navigators	CARES Foundation Inc.
ACCSES	Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY
Allergy & Asthma Network	Children's Cancer Cause
ALS Association	Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation
Alstrom Syndrome International	Chronic Care Policy Alliance
American Association on Health and Disability	Chronic Disease Coalition
American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association	Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy and Innovation
American Diabetes Association	CommunicationFIRST
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention	Congenital Hyperinsulinism International
American Kidney Fund	COPD Foundation
American Liver Foundation	Crohn's & Colitis Foundation
Angioma Alliance	Cure HHT
Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired	Cure SMA
Association of Oncology Social Work (AOSW)	CureDuchenne
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America	Cystic Fibrosis Research, Inc. (CFRI)
Autistic Self Advocacy Network	Danielle Byron Henry Migraine Foundation
Autistic Women and Nonbinary Network	Davis Phinney Foundation
Axis Advocacy	Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Beyond Type 1	Diabetes Patient Advocacy Coalition (DPAC)
Brain Injury Association of America	Disability Rights California
Bridge the Gap - SYNGAP Education and Research Foundation	Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
California Access Coalition	Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children
California Chronic Care Coalition	Dystonia Advocacy Network
Dystonia Medical Research Foundation	National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

Epilepsy Foundation
Family Values @ Work
Family Voices
Family Voices NJ
Fight Colorectal Cancer
GBS|CIDP Foundation International
Genetic Alliance
Global Healthy Living Foundation
Global Liver Institute
GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer
Gould Syndrome Foundation
Health Hats
Heart Valve Voice US
Hemophilia Federation of America
Hope Charities
HPV Alliance
Huntington's Disease Society of America
Hydrocephalus Association
International Foundation for AiArthritis
International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders
International Pemphigus Pemphigoid Foundation
Interstitial Cystitis Association
Lakeshore Foundation
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Lewy Body Dementia Association
Livpact
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Lupus Foundation of America
Lymphangiomatosis & Gorham's Disease Alliance
Lymphatic Education & Research Network
March of Dimes
Mental Health America
Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation
METAvivor
MLD Foundation
Multiple Sclerosis Association of America
Muscular Dystrophy Association
NAACP New York State Conference
NASTAD
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alopecia Areata Foundation
The Bonnell Foundation: Living with cystic fibrosis
The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy and Innovation
The Headache and Migraine Policy Forum
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Fabry Disease Foundation
National Health Council
National Health Law Program
National Hemophilia Foundation
National Kidney Foundation
National MPS Society
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Rare Disorders
National Pancreas Foundation
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Urea Cycle Disorders Foundation
NBIA Disorders Association
NephCure Kidney International
New York Chapter of the National SCDA
New York State Sickle Cell Advocacy Network
Organic Acidemia Association
Paid Leave for the United States (PL+US)
Patient Advisor
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
Project Sleep
PTEN Hamartoma Tumor Syndrome Foundation
PTEN World
Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation
Pulmonary Hypertension Association
PXE International
RespectAbility
Restless Legs Syndrome Foundation
SCID Angels for Life Foundation
Scleroderma Foundation
Sickle Cell Thalassemia Patients Network (SCTPN)
Siegel Rare Neuroimmune Association
Sjogren's Foundation
Solve ME/CFS Initiative
Spina Bifida Association
Susan G. Komen
TASH
The AIDS Institute
The American Liver Foundation
The Arc of the United States
The Marfan Foundation
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research

The Migraine Diva
The Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, Inc
Tourette Association of America
Transplant Recipients International Organization (TRIO)
Transplant Support Organization
Tuberous Sclerosis Alliance
United Cerebral Palsy National
United for Charitable Assistance
United Spinal Association
United States International Council on Disabilities
US Hereditary Angioedema Association
VetsFirst
VHL Alliance
Whistleblowers of America
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease
ZERO - The End of Prostate Cancer

ⁱ <https://erj.ersjournals.com/content/early/2020/03/17/13993003.00547-2020.figures-only>

ⁱⁱ

https://www.hopkinsguides.com/hopkins/view/Johns_Hopkins_ABX_Guide/540747/all/Coronavirus_COVID_19__SARS_CoV_2_