



Dear Member of Congress,

As the 117th Congress gets underway, our nation continues to grapple with the unprecedented national public health and economic crisis brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. Millions of people are hurting from lost jobs, lost wages, and lost loved ones. For many in this country, however, coronavirus comes on top of and simultaneous with an existing crisis: the legacy of structural racism and misogyny entrenched in our economic and health policies, as evidenced by the disproportionate negative impacts the pandemic is imposing on women and families of color. What we see today is not new; it is crisis on top of crisis.

The coronavirus has shone a spotlight on gender and racial disparities in every facet of our society. Black people, along with Indigenous people and other People of Color (BIPOC) are disproportionately in jobs that don't provide a living wage or adequate benefits. This was the case even before the crisis. During the crisis these jobs have been deemed "essential" and require workers to put themselves at risk every day. This has contributed to people of color, and particularly Black and Latinx people, dying at a disproportionate rate from the coronavirus.

Women too have faced overwhelming hardship since the pandemic began, and it is threatening our economic future. Women are on the frontlines — we are grocery store clerks, restaurant cashiers, bus drivers, child care providers, cleaning staff, delivery food and nursing home workers. We are also working moms who are struggling to care for children while working a fulltime job. And it's getting to be too much to bear. Women are leaving the workforce at record numbers – both from job losses but also because of the struggle to balance work and family caregiving responsibilities.

As one of the leading voices for women and families, the National Partnership for Women & Families urges Congress to strongly center those most impacted by continuing with a people- and families-first strategy for relief. We provide the following recommendations to bend the moral arc towards justice, fairness, and inclusivity and to enable women of every race, ethnicity, and national origin, religion, immigration status, income level, family status, disability status, sexual orientation and gender identity to prosper.

### **Immediate Coronavirus-related Priorities**

We are grateful for early steps taken by the Biden administration to address the urgent need of the pandemic. Multiple National Partnership priorities have been addressed by the President's executive orders, including:

- Directing the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to issue standards to ensure protections in the workplace from coronavirus for all workers;
- Requesting that the Department of Labor clarify rules to establish that workers have a right to refuse work that could jeopardize their health and that workers who do will still be able to obtain unemployment insurance;

- Creating a coronavirus Health Equity Task Force and improving the monitoring and tracking of coronavirus by race and ethnicity to ensure equitable pandemic response and recovery.
- Establishing a Special Enrollment Period through May to increase pathways to health coverage during the pandemic.
- Committing \$50 million to outreach and education to help people learn about and access affordable coverage options.
- Restoring a dedication to scientific integrity in federal agencies.

Looking forward, one of the National Partnership’s key priorities is the swift advancement of a rescue package so Americans can receive the relief they need. We applaud President Biden’s proposed American Rescue Plan and stand ready to work with the new Administration and Congress to advance this critical rescue package. In particular, we are heartened to see key National Partnership priorities included in President Biden’s plan, including:

- Universal access to emergency paid leave and paid sick days;
- Increased assistance for health insurance premiums on the exchange and for laid-off workers;
- Targeted funds to address health inequities;
- The elimination of out-of-pocket costs for coronavirus testing, treatment, and vaccination.

### **Additional Legislative Priorities**

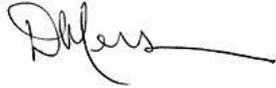
In order for this country, and women and families in particular, to build back better, Congress should prioritize taking immediate legislative action to strengthen economic and health outcomes for all working people, and should focus on women and people of color who have been disproportionately devastated by the economic and health effects of the coronavirus pandemic. This includes legislation that:

- **Creates a national care infrastructure** that recognizes that both unpaid and paid caregiving is an essential part of our society, and invests in our professional care workforce while no longer forcing people to choose between caring for themselves and their families and earning a paycheck; we support passage of the FAMILY Act, the Healthy Families Act, and the Schedules that Work Act;
- **Takes serious, sweeping action to address the maternal health crisis**, such as the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act and extending Medicaid coverage to 12 months postpartum;
- **Reduces health care costs and increases coverage options and targets pervasive health inequities**, such as the ACA Enhancement Act and the Health Equity and Accountability Act;
- **Ensures that workplaces are free of discrimination and harassment**, such as the BE HEARD in the Workplace Act and the EMPOWER Act;
- **Ensures that all working people, regardless of their job, have access to the same protections and benefits**, such as the Part-Time Workers’ Bill of Rights Act and the Domestic Worker Bill of Rights Act;
- **Stands up for abortion rights**, including the EACH Woman Act and the Women’s Health Protection Act.

We have listed our full priorities for the 117th Congress [here](#).

The legislative priorities detailed above are critical to improving the lives of women and families in this country and helping women regain the decades of progress lost during the pandemic. Please contact Erika Moritsugu, Vice President for Congressional Relations, at [emoritsugu@nationalpartnership.org](mailto:emoritsugu@nationalpartnership.org) with any questions or to discuss the work ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Ness", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Debra L. Ness  
President