

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

As work continues on the next urgently needed spending bill, we urge you to include language that ensures unemployment assistance is available to everyone affected by the sharp economic downturn. Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) is one of the most critical tools we have to help Americans right now, but it requires a Major Disaster Declaration in order to be deployed, and the Stafford Act is unclear whether a pandemic is eligible for this declaration. We urge you to include language in the next response legislation to clarify the Stafford Act and make clear that DUA can be available for pandemics like this crisis.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) is the fastest way to fill the hole in suffering families' budgets. Millions of Americans have already been laid off from, but UI provides the opportunity to provide cash targeted directly to them.

Unfortunately, UI does not reach everyone. It does not cover those who are self-employed, those who work as contractors or those who see hours cut but are not laid off. This represents tens of millions of Americans according to Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data. For these millions of Americans, the best tool is DUA.

We urge you to include in a coronavirus response a provision to make DUA available under the Stafford Act for this crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic truly necessitates this federal assistance.

Sincerely,



Denny Heck
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress

CC:

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio, Chair, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure