

# AFL-CIO

AMERICA'S UNIONS

May 15, 2020

Dear Representative:

The AFL-CIO strongly urges you to support the HEROES Act (H.R. 6800), a bold response to this unprecedented crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic is the greatest public health threat of our lifetime and has resulted in the most serious economic catastrophe since the Great Depression. More than 85,000 people have died, and now as many as 50 million people have lost their jobs in the past two months and over 12 million people have lost their health care.

A month ago, the labor movement urged Congress to adopt legislation to address America's Five Economic Essentials:

- Keep front-line workers safe.
- Keep workers employed and protect earned pension checks.
- Keep state and local governments, public schools and the U.S. Postal Service solvent and working.
- Keep America healthy – protect and expand health insurance for all workers.
- Keep America competitive – hire people to build infrastructure.

The HEROES Act includes provisions that address most if not all of these economic essentials. The HEROES Act requires OSHA to issue an emergency workplace infectious disease standard. It gives critical aid to state and local governments, public schools and the U.S. Postal Service. It provides relief for multiemployer pension plans. It includes a 100% subsidy to continue health coverage for laid off workers.

It provides a framework for helping employers keep workers on payroll, and it extends unemployment benefits through the end of the year, including an extra \$600 a week for those who are out of work through no fault of their own. It includes more direct payments to working people. It ensures free treatment for health care related to COVID-19. It earmarks billions of dollars to protect our elections. And it provides relief for renters and homeowners and additional food assistance.

Of course, as is the case with any legislation, the HEROES Act is not perfect. We would urge Congress to require not only OSHA but also MSHA to issue an emergency temporary standard on infectious disease to protect mineworkers.

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**American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations**

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**RICHARD L. TRUMKA**  
PRESIDENT

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**TEFERE GEBRE**  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

In addition, since there is no consensus in the labor movement about the GROW Act (which authorizes composite multiemployer retirement plans), we would suggest that there be further review and debate on it as the HEROES Act moves toward enactment.

All of us know someone who is sick or is suffering. COVID-19 is pushing our country to the brink. Don't tell us we should wait a little longer for the unemployment benefits we earned or the health insurance we deserve. We have waited long enough. Don't tell us we should sacrifice our pensions. Don't tell us states should go bankrupt or that federal relief is a blue state bailout. We are all vulnerable, and this nation deserves better.

FDR said the only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. This is not a moment for the doubters or the cynics or the naysayers. This is not a time for obstruction or partisanship or business as usual. Working people demand action before it's too late. Vote yes on H.R. 6800.

Sincerely,



Richard L. Trumka  
President

RLT/BS/sdw  
opeiu#2, afl-cio

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