

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 9, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20200

Dear President Biden:

As the United States continues to face mass unemployment, food insecurity, and an economic slowdown, it is crucial that the next coronavirus package includes an additional round of economic impact payments, commonly known as direct payments. We write to express our opposition to the proposal to lower the income eligibility threshold, as it would leave millions of Americans out of receiving direct financial relief. Narrowing the income eligibility for direct payments risks doing too little to jumpstart our economy. While we recently learned of House leadership’s plan to maintain the income eligibility for direct payments as established in the two previous, bipartisan relief packages, we urge that this proposal move forward with strong bipartisan support.¹

Reducing income eligibility for direct payments risks excluding many people from needed relief. Some estimates suggest 40 million or more Americans who received direct payments from the second relief package would not receive a third round of direct payments if the new, reported on thresholds were adopted.² Direct payments are popular and bipartisan – about three-quarters of Americans, evenly distributed by party affiliation, have supported these payments.³ It is imperative that we provide working families the relief they need to survive.

There are indications that narrowing income eligibility would fail to provide relief to those in need. January 2021 U.S. Census Bureau data suggests that over 40% of households with 2019 income between \$50,000 and \$150,000 lost income in 2020.⁴ Given the likelihood of a third round of direct payments being based on 2019 tax returns, reducing the income threshold could inadvertently leave middle class Americans with reduced relief or no payment at all. These trends

¹ Caygle, Heather, et al, Feb. 8, 2021, “House Democrats settle income debate for direct payments,” Politico. Accessed Feb. 8, 2021. <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/02/08/democrats-income-debate-direct-payments-467626>

² Colby, Clifford, et al, Feb. 8, 2021, “Stimulus check qualifications: What they are now and how they could change for a third check,” Feb. 8, 2021, CNBC. Accessed Feb. 8, 2021. <https://www.cnet.com/news/stimulus-check-qualifications-what-they-are-now-and-how-they-could-change-for-a-third-check/>

³ Baum, Matthew, et al, October 2020, “The State of the Nation: A 50-State COVID-19 Survey; Report 15: Public Support for A Fifth COVID-19 Relief Package.” <http://www.kateto.net/covid19/COVID19%20CONSORTIUM%20REPORT%2015%20RELIEF%20OCT%202020.pdf>.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, January 27, 2021, “Week 22 Household Pulse Survey: January 6 – January 18.” Accessed Feb. 8, 2021. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2021/demo/hhp/hhp22.html>

would explain a concerning rise in food insecurity of households whose incomes were between \$50,000 and \$75,000 and a doubling in the number of Americans living paycheck to paycheck.⁵⁶

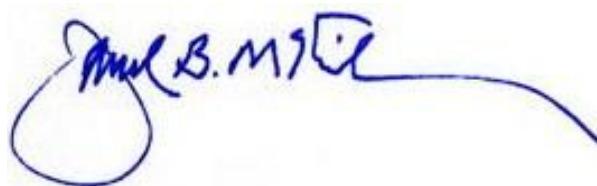
We recently introduced the bipartisan *Coronavirus Assistance for American Families Act*, H.R. 795, to ensure direct payments are equitably and predictably provided to working families. This bill would provide \$1,400 per filer (\$2,800 for joint filers) and another \$1,400 per dependent, with full payment going to single filers making \$75,000 and joint filers making \$150,000. Our bill would ensure that Americans struggling due to the pandemic receive the money they need to afford a healthy meal, keep homes heated, and pay for needed expenses that were put off due to the worst recession to face the U.S. since the Great Depression. We urge you to adopt the provisions of our bill.

Ultimately, these checks represent a lifeline to working families – a lifeline they have come to expect – to help them through the pandemic. We urge you to maintain strong support for working families in the next relief package.

Sincerely,



LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER
Member of Congress



DAVID B. MCKINLEY, P.E.
Member of Congress

CC:

Hon. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
Hon. Charles Schumer, Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
Hon. Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
Hon. Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives

⁵ Forsythe, Eliza, Feb. 1, 2021, “Understanding Unemployment Insurance Coverage in Early 2021,” University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign. Accessed Feb. 8, 2021.

<http://publish.illinois.edu/elizaforsythe/files/2021/02/understanding-unemployment-insurance-coverage-in-early-2021-version-feb-1-2021.pdf>.

⁶ Leonhardt, Megan, Dec. 11, 2020, “63% of Americans have been living paycheck to paycheck since Covid hit,” CNBC. Accessed Feb. 8, 2021. <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/12/11/majority-of-americans-are-living-paycheck-to-paycheck-since-covid-hit.html>.