

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 22, 2020

The Honorable Steven T. Mnuchin
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20220

The Honorable Charles Rettig
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20224

Dear Secretary Mnuchin and Commissioner Rettig:

In the on-going coronavirus pandemic, millions of families across the country are experiencing financial hardship and struggling to make ends meet. To provide financial relief, Congress passed and the President signed the bipartisan Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. This legislation includes a one-time economic impact, or stimulus, payment to eligible recipients. For individuals who filed taxes in fiscal year 2018 or 2019 and provided the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) with their direct deposit information, the stimulus checks will be automatic. Unfortunately, people who do not file taxes may some face barriers to receiving their stimulus payment, especially those experiencing homelessness.

In April, the IRS developed an online payment tool for non-filers that allows them to provide the IRS with the financial information needed to make the stimulus payment¹. While we appreciate this development, there are still access barriers that must be addressed to allow over 500,000 individuals experiencing homelessness² to receive their stimulus checks.

Many individuals experiencing homelessness have limited access to the internet or internet-connected devices, and this number has likely increased due to coronavirus. Studies show that older homeless adults have barriers to possessing mobile phones and internet use due to finances or cognitive impairments³. A common way people access the internet is through public spaces like libraries or coffee shops, which are closed as part of coronavirus response efforts.

¹ <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/non-filers-enter-payment-info-here>

² <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6305882/>

Furthermore, services for the homeless that could assist with accessing and filling out the online payment tool are no longer operating or are doing so on a reduced schedule. In addition to limited connectivity to the internet, the homeless also experience barriers to having a bank account or a fixed address where they could receive a physical stimulus check.

We strongly urge the IRS to develop guidance for ensuring that individuals experiencing homelessness are not excluded from receiving stimulus checks. Further, we ask that the IRS report to Congress on measures that will be taken to address barriers to receiving payment, including lack of access to the internet, mailing addresses, and bank accounts or bank accounts on file with the IRS. Finally, we urge the IRS to coordinate with local and national nonprofit and other community support providers, including local Continuums of Care, to inform those who are homeless about their eligibility for benefits and mitigate some barriers to distributing payments.

As the IRS continues to ensure that Americans can expeditiously receive their stimulus checks, we urge you to take immediate action to ensure that people experiencing homelessness are not left behind. We appreciate your attention to this urgent matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Anna G. Eshoo
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Cedric L. Richmond
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Jahana Hayes
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