



News Release

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As Congress Debates COVID-19 Relief Funding, CED Calls for Swift Action and to Prioritize Impacted Families & Businesses and Defeating the Pandemic

Washington, DC, February 3, 2021...Today, the Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board (CED) released the following statement on the current congressional negotiations over COVID-19 relief funding:

The nation needs immediate action to expand health care resources to defeat the coronavirus and to provide relief to families, businesses, and state and local governments that have been devastated by this pandemic. Mutations of the coronavirus threaten public health and the economy now, and the important unemployment benefit supplements in the current legislation expire in March. The Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board (CED) welcomes the bipartisan efforts underway and urges quick action on the necessary programs and funding to reassure the nation, strengthen the economy, and get Americans back to work and school safely.

As a champion of fiscal responsibility, CED believes it would be fiscally irresponsible not to fund the necessary measures to halt the spread of the virus, provide the much-needed economic relief, and rebuild an economy with high growth, resilience, and equal opportunity for all.

We support the health care measures in the Administration's plan and are encouraged that these measures are receiving support from members of both parties in Congress. Timely compromise is within reach. In determining new funding, the funding in the Additional Coronavirus Response and Relief Act of December should be considered, along with the extent to which these funds have been used. We also suggest a careful examination of the massive increase in the public health workforce proposed in the Administration's plan.

Top priorities for economic relief include extending the soon to expire unemployment benefit supplements. We favor the higher benefit of \$400 and the extension through September, although using state unemployment rates as guideposts to end this benefit would be even better. We support the consensus on food assistance, and on aid to small business.

The remaining issues require aggressiveness and targeting—in other words, necessary funding, but focused carefully on need.

We urge that funding for eviction and foreclosure relief match the enormous need. Parents cannot go back to work without child care and education, and the child care sector and schools need further support to reopen safely. And funding for access to broadband is essential for both work and school. In each of these areas, the CED urges a level of funding which is used not just for the urgent relief but for building a stronger economy for the future. This is especially important for schools where many students have lost ground and need help to recover.



Assistance to state and local governments, which are at the epicenter of the pandemic, is badly needed. Their shedding workers weakens communities and the economy as a whole, as learned during the financial crisis of a decade ago. Assistance can be targeted to true need through a formula that replaces a percentage of revenues lost because of the economic downturn.

We recommend that any broadly distributed stimulus payments be targeted to lower-income households who need the money and will spend it. Finally, consideration of raising the national minimum wage warrants more time for discussion and debate to help the millions who are unemployed today.

The risks to public health, the economy, and the most vulnerable are great. The need for action is clearly urgent. Our elected policymakers should focus on the greatest needs and come together to get the job done before it is too late.

About CED

The Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board (CED) is the nonprofit, nonpartisan, business-led public policy center that delivers well-researched analysis and reasoned solutions in the nation's interest. CED Trustees are chief executive officers and key executives of leading US companies who bring their unique experience to address today's pressing policy issues. Collectively they represent 30+ industries, over a trillion dollars in revenue, and over 4 million employees. www.ced.org

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