

Federal Coronavirus Legislation

The U.S. House passed a funding package on Friday, March 13, 2020, titled the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* (HR 6201) with a vote of 363 to 40. The bill contains several important components, including:

Health Provisions

- **Emergency FMAP Increase:** The bill includes a temporary 6.2 percentage point increase to states' federal medical assistance percentage for the duration of the public health emergency for COVID-19. (Estimated by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities as a \$4.46 billion boost for CA).
- **No Cost Sharing of COVID-19 Testing Under Medicaid/CHIP:** Medicaid to provide coverage for COVID-19 testing, including the cost of a provider visit. Coverage must be provided at no cost. States have the option to extend Medicaid eligibility to uninsured populations for the purposes of COVID-19 diagnostic testing. State expenditures for medical and administrative costs would be matched by the federal government at 100 percent.
- **Private Plan Coverage of Testing:** Private health plans are required to provide coverage for COVID-19 diagnostic testing at no cost to the consumer, including the cost of a provider, urgent care center and emergency room visits in order to receive testing.
- **Reimbursement for Testing of Uninsured Individuals:** – Includes \$1 billion to reimburse the costs of COVID-19 diagnostic testing and services provided to individuals without health insurance.

Nutrition Provisions

- **SNAP Flexibility for Low-Income Jobless Workers:** Suspends the work and work training requirements for SNAP during the crisis.
- **Additional SNAP Flexibilities:** Allows states to request special waivers from USDA to provide temporary, emergency CR-SNAP benefits to existing SNAP households up to the maximum monthly allotment, as well as giving USDA broad discretion to provide much more flexibility for States in managing SNAP caseloads.
- **WIC :** \$500 million to provide access to nutritious foods to low-income pregnant women or mothers with young children who lose their jobs or are laid off due to the emergency.
- **Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP):** \$400 million to assist local food banks to meet increased demand for low-income Americans during the emergency. Of the total, \$300 million is for the purchase of nutritious foods and \$100 million is to support the storage and distribution of the foods.

- **Use of EBT for School Meals Programs:** USDA may approve state plans to provide emergency Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) food assistance to households with children who would otherwise receive free or reduced-price meals if the child's school will be closed for no less than 5 consecutive days.
- **Senior Nutrition Program:** Includes \$250 million for the Senior Nutrition program operated by Area Agencies on Aging to provide approximately 25 million additional home-delivered and pre-packaged meals to low-income seniors who are home-bound, or have disabilities or have multiple chronic illnesses. Caregivers for seniors who are home-bound are also eligible.
- **National School Lunch Program Requirement Waivers:** All child and adult care centers may operate as non-congregate (i.e. allows them to take food to go). Allows USDA to waive meal pattern requirements in child nutrition programs if there are shortages of qualifying foods.

Employed Worker Supports

- **Amendments to the Family and Medical Leave Act:** Employees of employers with fewer than 500 employees and government employers, who have been on the job for at least 30 days, would have the right take up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave under the FMLA to be used for any of the following reasons:
 - o quarantine due to exposure to or symptoms of coronavirus;
 - o To care for an at-risk family member who is quarantined;
 - o To care for a child of an employee if the child's school or place of care has been closed, or the child-care provider is unavailable, due to a coronavirus;
 - o After the two weeks of paid leave, employees will receive a benefit from their employers that will be no less than two-thirds of the employee's usual pay.
- **Payroll Credit for Required Paid Family Leave:** Employers would receive a refundable tax credit equal to 100 percent of qualified family leave wages paid by an employer for each calendar quarter.
- **Emergency Paid Sick Leave:** Employers with fewer than 500 employees and government employers must provide employees two weeks of paid sick leave, paid at the employee's regular rate, to quarantine or seek a diagnosis or preventive care for coronavirus; or paid at two-thirds the employee's regular rate to care for a family member for such purposes or to care for a child whose school has closed, or child care provider is unavailable, due to the coronavirus. Full-time employees are entitled to 2 weeks (80 hours) and part-time employees are entitled to the typical number of hours that they work in a typical two-week period.

- **Payroll Credit for Required Paid Sick Leave:** Employers would receive a refundable tax credit equal to 100 percent of qualified paid sick leave wages paid by an employer for each calendar quarter.

- **Unemployment Compensation Administration:** \$1 billion is available for emergency grants to states for activities related to processing and paying unemployment insurance (UI) benefits.
 - o \$500 million would be used to provide immediate additional funding to all states for staffing, technology, systems, and other administrative costs
 - o \$500 million would be reserved for emergency grants to states which experienced at least a 10 percent increase in unemployment
 - o States experiencing an increase of 10 percent or more in their unemployment rate (over the previous year) would receive 100 percent federal funding for Extended Benefits. Extended Benefits (EB) are triggered when unemployment is high in a state and provide up to an additional 26 weeks after regular UI benefits (usually 26 weeks) are exhausted.

Bill text: <https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20200309/BILLS-116hr6201-SUS.pdf>

Bill

summary: <https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/Families%20First%20Summary%20FINAL.pdf>

Roll Call Vote: <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2020/roll102.xml>