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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4606

August 3rd, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington D.C., 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy and Minority Leader Schumer:

As your negotiations continue, I write to ensure that the priorities and concerns of Iowans are included in the next COVID-19 relief package. With record unemployment and rising coronavirus cases, we have been reaching out to business owners and families across Northeast Iowa and the stories that we are hearing are heartbreaking. As Iowans—along with others across the county—struggle to make ends meet, we must move quickly to pass a comprehensive, bipartisan package, which should have already been signed into law. Particularly with the expiration of critical supplemental unemployment assistance, eviction protections, and the next school year looming, time is of the essence.

“My wife was working at a casino. She was laid off when they had to shut their doors in late March... The \$1200 supplement and the \$600 a week in unemployment was a lifesaver for us, so that we could continue to pay our mortgage and other debts. Without this, we would likely be in default on our home mortgage. We are deeply grateful to you and others who supported this program.” – Marquette, Iowa

“We own a store that has been serving Iowa for 77 years, and this business has been in my family for 5 generations. Our business is down 30%, and we are not seeing things pick up—they are only getting worse. Without further help from SBA, I'm not sure how we will survive the retail downturn in another two months. We're in a dire situation here. We need support... We needed it several months ago. And we certainly need it even more now.” – Vinton, Iowa

“I was preparing to return to my classroom this fall. Last week I was emailed and told that we are not opening. I work with 3,4 & 5-year olds at a preschool. With COVID restrictions

firmly in place, DHS and county health recommendations- my director felt it harder to open. Staffing, cleaning and decreased numbers for students made it financially challenging to unlock the doors. I truly want face to face learning but at 50 years old, I also need to be careful.” – Cedar Falls, Iowa

“My husband owns his own business, and I am self-employed. Obviously, both of our jobs were cut substantially due to the pandemic. Because I am self-employed, I cannot pay unemployment on myself, so \$600 was all I received. That \$600 a week paid our bills, groceries and gas — plus we have two kids. Now that it’s ended, I’m afraid that this coronavirus is going to bankrupt us again. What happens if we can’t pay our bills? What happens when my husband or I get sick and have to quarantine for two weeks? What happens when schools reopen, and my kids bring the virus home? We need help.” – Cedar Rapids, Iowa

These are only a few of the 140 stories that my office has received since July 27th, 2020. The CARES Act, along with the other bipartisan packages passed by Congress, has been a critical lifeline, but the pandemic isn’t over. Many families are still feeling the real economic hardship that it created, especially now as businesses that reopened are shutting down again and our childcare providers and school districts are facing difficult decisions. For that reason, I respectfully urge the next bipartisan relief package prioritize the following:

Direct Support for Iowa Families

Our next package should include additional financial assistance. Specifically, the next bill should provide expanded economic impact payments to families who need them, in addition to ensuring Treasury addresses the problem of people not getting their first direct payment. It’s also critical that we extend supplemental unemployment benefits and provide resources to our states as needed to continue this critical program.

Assistance for State & Local Government

We need to make sure that our communities are safe and that essential services continue by providing more direct assistance to our state and local governments, who are facing budget shortfalls of millions of dollars with no way to recoup lost revenues.

Support for the United States Postal Service (USPS)

We are all hearing of the growing backlog at the Postal Service and the importance of deliveries at this time. While our Postal Service has long been in jeopardy, aid is needed now more than ever. Any future package should include additional support for USPS.

Funding for Schools and Childcare Providers

Iowa families are struggling with childcare options while schools and childcare providers worry about the safety of their operations and facilities. We need to make sure that our children’s education is not interrupted, regardless of whether it happens in the classroom or at home. Parents should not have to make heartbreaking decisions between keeping kids safe and returning to work. Funding is needed for additional training and guidance as well as infrastructure improvements, personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning supplies, and distance learning support, such as broadband.

Health and Safety Protections

We need to continue to take every precaution when it comes to controlling the spread of the virus. I urge that the next package include strong worker protections along with significant investments in expanding testing and tracing. We also need to start planning now for the upcoming election and include funding for vote-by-mail initiatives.

Assistance for Iowa Industries

We need to improve and expand the resources available to businesses who are trying to reopen and adapt. We should look at ways to incentivize the production of PPE and other critical supplies and safety infrastructure, giving our manufacturers the opportunity to compete to new contracts. We should also explore changing the Paycheck Protection Program and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan to allow businesses to take out a second loan if needed or have existing debt forgiven while ensuring artificial caps don't hurt our businesses. These programs should also treat all businesses fairly—like our farmers. Lastly, we need direct aid for key industries that have been left behind, like our biofuels producers.

Iowans, and all Americans, need Congress to put aside partisan differences to come to the table and focus on realistic, common sense solutions. We must move quickly toward a bipartisan agreement, and I again respectfully urge you to strengthen our nation's path toward recovery by including these priorities in the next coronavirus relief package.

Thank you for your continued leadership as we address this crisis, and I look forward to working with you as we work to craft a bipartisan package that provides real relief to the families, businesses, and frontline workers who need it most and can't afford to wait any longer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Abby Finkenauer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Abby Finkenauer
Member of Congress