



Families First Coronavirus Response Act (H.R. 6201)

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act was signed into law on March 18. This law is urgently needed to help communities respond to and weather the disruption from COVID-19 but it is not a complete response to help working families. Below are highlights of key provisions in the law and some of its limits.

New Federal Medicaid Funds: The law increases federal contributions to support state and territorial Medicaid programs by another 6.2 percentage points. This \$36 billion in new federal funds will help states respond to rapidly changing public health needs and maintain Medicaid for vulnerable populations during the pandemic. But as the virus spreads straining hospitals and state budgets, more federal funds will be needed quickly.

COVID-19 Testing: Whether people rely on their job, Medicaid, Medicare or the Affordable Care Act for their health care coverage, the bill requires COVID-19 testing to be covered at no cost. It also creates a new Medicaid option for states to cover uninsured individuals (but not undocumented immigrants) for testing, with federal funds picking up the cost.

Enhanced Unemployment Insurance (UI): UI helps workers and their families get through hard times with cash benefits. When people spend their UI benefits, they help the economy, which is stalled by business and factory closures to limit and slow the spread of the virus. Under the law, \$1 billion is available to states to staff up to meet increased demand for UI benefits from people impacted by COVID-19 and to make it easier for unemployed workers to get the benefits they need quickly.

Increase Access to Food Assistance: As workers lose work hours or their jobs because of temporary work closures due to COVID-19, more families with children will need help to not go hungry. The bill provides emergency SNAP assistance to families with children who attend a school that's closed and who would otherwise receive free or reduced-price meals, it expands federal support for senior meals, food banks and additional food program flexibility to help children who depend on school meals.

Limited Emergency Paid Leave: This law mandates that all public employers and private employers with fewer than 500 employees provide two weeks of emergency guaranteed paid sick leave and up to 10 more weeks of emergency family medical leave if impacted by COVID-19. The law also creates a loophole for health care employers to opt out of these new emergency requirements and for the Secretary of Labor to exempt small businesses. AFSCME will fight to improve these inadequate provisions. All families need the income support to stay home when they or a family member is sick, and it is good for public health. For more details see [AFSCME's COVID-19 factsheet on paid leave](#).

Next Steps: As Congress works on a third emergency spending bill AFSCME is fighting for the health and safety protections workers on the front lines need to respond to the virus, robust funding to states and localities, and the economic help families and communities need to weather this pandemic and to allow AFSCME members to continue providing public services we all depend upon.

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