

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

October 19, 2020

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

Dear Leader McConnell,

As members of the Democratic Women’s Caucus, we are deeply disappointed by your unwillingness to prioritize funding that would help women and their families in the Senate’s latest announcement of a narrow coronavirus relief package. At a time when women have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 recession, particularly women of color, the Senate must do its job and pass legislation that prioritizes the challenges facing women and their families so they can get through this period of tumult.

The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics jobs report confirms that the economic crisis brought on by this pandemic is predominately impacting women, making it a “she-cession.” While the economy added 661,000 jobs in September, women gained an estimated 43% of the jobs despite making up 50% of the workforce.<sup>1</sup> During the same month, more than 1.1 million workers left the workforce, meaning they are no longer seeking employment. Of that figure, 865,000—a staggering 80%—were women, including 324,000 Latinas and 58,000 Black women.<sup>2</sup> Black and Latina women suffered the most during the beginning of the pandemic, as the main industries they work in experienced significant job losses in the initial wave.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, while the overall unemployment rate dropped to 7.9% in September, about 1 in 9 Black women and Latinas remained unemployed.<sup>4</sup>

This pandemic continues to highlight that job losses among women have been a direct result of the collapse of female-dominated industries such as child care, hospitality, retail, education, and health care. Other factors, including the gender wage gap and women’s disproportionate share of caregiving responsibilities, also continue to drive women out of the workforce. The Senate’s inaction in the face of these challenges threatens to erode decades of progress women have made in the workforce, jeopardizing the long-term economic security of women, their families, and our entire economy.

As of today, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused more than 220,000 deaths, over 8 million Americans diagnosed with the virus, and more than 25 million Americans collecting some form of jobless aid. On October 1, 2020, the House passed an updated version of the Heroes Act to address the ongoing public health and economic crises as negotiations continue and further assistance is needed. Key priorities in this legislation include direct payments for workers and their families, funds to bolster education and small businesses, funding to provide stability for state and local governments and the child care industry, and resources for domestic

---

<sup>1</sup> National Women’s Law Center. (2020). “Four Times More Women Than Men Dropped Out of the Labor Force in September” [Fact sheet]. <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/september-jobs-fs1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Time’s Up Foundation. (2020). “Women Dropping Out of Labor Force at Alarming Rate.” <https://timesupfoundation.org/september-jobs-report-women-dropping-out-of-labor-force-at-alarming-rate/>

<sup>4</sup> National Women’s Law Center, *supra*.

violence shelters. This legislation was a major step toward recognizing how women have been disproportionately affected by job losses and caregiving demands since the pandemic began.

During these unprecedented times, and as we enter the traditional flu season, one thing is clear—this pandemic will not be subsiding anytime soon. With the health and economic security of women and families at stake, we implore Senate Republicans to shift their wildly misguided priorities and focus on providing comprehensive coronavirus relief legislation that addresses the needs of women and their families rather than rushing through a Supreme Court nomination.

Sincerely,

/s/  
BRENDA L. LAWRENCE  
Member of Congress

/s/  
LOIS FRANKEL  
Member of Congress

/s/  
JACKIE SPEIER  
Member of Congress

/s/  
VERONICA ESCOBAR  
Member of Congress

/s/  
DEB HAALAND  
Member of Congress

/s/  
KATHERINE CLARK  
Member of Congress

/s/  
DEBBIE DINGELL  
Member of Congress

/s/  
ROSA DELAURO  
Member of Congress