

FRANK PALLONE, JR., NEW JERSEY
CHAIRMAN

CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS, WASHINGTON
RANKING MEMBER

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEETH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927

Minority (202) 225-3641

February 11, 2021

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone:

We write to express our disappointment that you are pushing forward with a partisan process for further COVID-19 relief when Republicans stand ready to work with you. Last Congress, Republicans and Democrats came together on five separate occasions to deliver several trillion dollars in relief for Americans. There is no reason to abandon bipartisanship now. We have continuously made clear that we want to work with you and other Democrats on the Committee on Energy and Commerce on another relief package so we can crush the virus, vaccinate as many Americans who want it as quickly as possible, and reopen our economy and schools.

We are proud of our previous work with you and we should build on that work to end the ongoing health and economic crisis. This unprecedented crisis is bigger than any single administration or political party. Last year, the Committee met this moment by continuing its rich tradition of bipartisan cooperation to deliver results to the American people. In 2020, the Committee played a central role in passing H.R. 6074, Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act; H.R. 6201, Families First Coronavirus Response Act; H.R. 748, CARES Act; H.R. 266, Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act; and H.R. 133, Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. Together, these bills accounted for over \$4 trillion in emergency aid to combat the virus and all were passed with significant bipartisan support. We should not abandon our shared goals now.

To date, the Committee has delivered resources for therapeutic and vaccine research and development, testing, and personal protective equipment (PPE), boosted our Strategic National Stockpile, taken steps to secure our pharmaceutical supply chains, improved broadband deployment and adoption for low income individuals, expanded access to telehealth, helped with utility payments for low income

households, combatted COVID-related fraud and scams, and much more. Without this robust bipartisan response from the Committee, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on our nation's health and economic well-being would have been far more devastating. Specifically, some of our most significant bipartisan accomplishments were:

- Over \$300 billion in funding for Health and Human Services, including over \$170 billion for health care providers relief fund, which was critical for helping those on the front lines of responding to COVID-19, over \$30 billion for states for testing and contact tracing, and \$23 billion to the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) for vaccine research and development, treatments, and testing. Over \$16 billion to the Centers for Disease Control, \$8.75 billion of which was for vaccine distribution.
- Ensuring diagnostic testing is free to every American.
- \$450 million in funding for telehealth services
- \$3.2 billion to help low-income Americans get connected to the Internet and to Internet-connected devices.
- Over \$1.3 billion in funding for broadband deployment to rural and Tribal areas to ensure all Americans are connected.
- Additional civil penalties for unfair and deceptive practices related to COVID-19, targeting scams ranging from selling fake cures to ripping off government payments.

The Committee has a record of success by putting aside political differences and working towards the common good. We tackle big problems and we do it together. Given this record of success, it is unfortunate that Democrats have decided to end our bipartisan cooperation to fight COVID-19 and embraced reconciliation as the path forward.

Reconciliation is fundamentally a partisan tool, which allows the Senate to bypass the filibuster and pass legislation with a simple fifty-one vote threshold. But the cost of this privileged consideration in the Senate is the parliamentary hurdles that impede our ability to legislate effectively to continue to combat the virus. By going down this partisan path, you are limiting the flexibility needed to respond effectively to this unprecedented pandemic.

Given our record of bipartisan success in passing policies to combat the pandemic and the strict rules that the budget reconciliation process imposes on the Committee's ability to legislate effectively to meet the needs of our nation's health and economic needs, the best path forward is to continue to work together. As President Biden has repeatedly stated, we are at war with COVID-19. Wars are fought and won by unifying in a common goal, not by dividing us to play partisan politics.

There is a great deal of common ground we can and should reach. We all agree on the need to continue providing robust resources for swift vaccine development, manufacture, distribution, and administration. We also must continue to bolster the Strategic National Stockpile and make sure states have the tests and PPE they need to safely reopen our economy and get our children back to school. We agree on the need to further address the mental health and substance abuse epidemic that has been worsened by the economic crisis and forced isolation. We also should continue our bipartisan path to close the digital divide, which has never been more important.

Working together, we can swiftly deliver a sixth relief package that includes these and other necessary, targeted policies to crush the virus. It is disheartening to see the Democratic Majority unnecessarily abandon the Committee's history of bipartisan cooperation and our recent record of success of delivering robust relief to the American people. We cannot support legislation crafted in a purely

partisan manner to achieve political goals. This is not the way our Committee should function, and it will not ensure America is able to recover and emerge from this crisis stronger than ever.

Sincerely,



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Republican Leader
Committee on Energy and Commerce



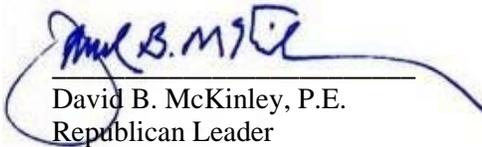
Fred Upton
Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Energy



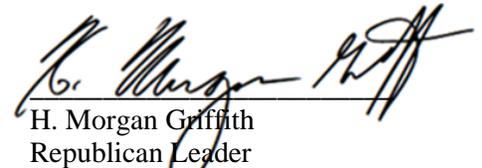
Robert E. Latta
Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Communications
and Technology



Brett Guthrie
Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Health



David B. McKinley, P.E.
Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Environment
and Climate Change



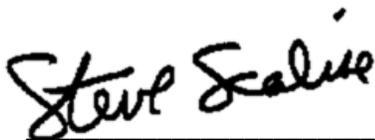
H. Morgan Griffith
Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations



Gus M. Bilirakis
Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection
and Commerce



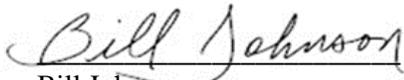
Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Member of Congress



Steve L. Scalise
Republican Whip



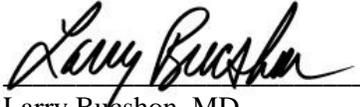
Adam Kinzinger
Member of Congress



Bill Johnson
Member of Congress



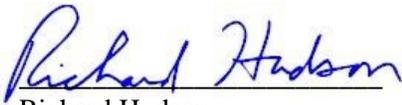
Billy Long
Member of Congress



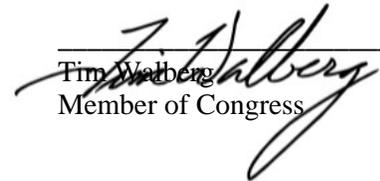
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Gary J. Palmer
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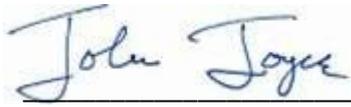
Debbie Lesko
Member of Congress



Greg Pence
Member of Congress



Dan Crenshaw
Member of Congress

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John Joyce, M.D.
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Kelly Armstrong in cursive script.

Kelly Armstrong
Member of Congress