

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 10, 2020

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

As Congress considers further legislation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to include additional support for the essential workers who have kept our pantries stocked, delivered lifesaving medical care, and ensured that the country continues to function while most people remain in their homes. Essential workers are routinely in close contact with potentially infected persons and are facing unprecedented hazards in their working environments.

More than 200,000 employees in Illinois contribute to the food supply chain, from butchers to supermarket cashiers. The median hourly wage in food and beverage stores is just \$12.49 an hour. Nearly 800,000 employees continue to work in hospitals, nursing homes, and other medical facilities across Illinois. A federally sponsored form of hazard pay for these, and other, essential employees should be included in any future relief package to ensure these brave men and women receive the financial support they deserve. Further, as places of business begin to reopen on a limited basis, ensuring that all employees have access to paid leave when they are ill is critical to limiting the spread of the virus. We ask that any future relief package also ensure that all workers can access emergency paid sick days and emergency paid family and medical leave in the event of a public health emergency, including the current coronavirus crisis.

As states around the country begin to slowly reopen their economies, places of business have the potential to become super spreaders of the virus. Differing guidelines and best practices create confusion and uncertainty for small business owners and managers. Requiring the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue an Emergency Temporary Standard that establishes a legal obligation for all workplaces to implement comprehensive infectious disease exposure control plans to keep workers safe will also help reduce the spread of this terrible virus.

The *CARES Act* provided much needed relief to workers and employers across the country, but we must do more. As Congress considers the next round of relief legislation, we urge you to build on previous efforts to provide more support to essential workers across the country so we can effectively protect the health, safety, and financial security of workers in the short term, and ensure that they are in the strongest position possible as our economy recovers.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership during this crisis.

Sincerely,



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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator