

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

March 30, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

As we work together to get much-needed relief to American families, we appreciate your strong support for direct payments and enhanced unemployment insurance for the millions of families affected by this public health and economic crisis.

We urge you to include recurring direct payments and automatic unemployment insurance extensions tied to economic conditions in your Build Back Better long-term economic plan. While we are pleased that the American Rescue Plan included a one-time direct payment and an extension of federal unemployment insurance programs, a single direct payment will not last long for most families, and we are worried about the cliff facing unemployed workers when the unemployment insurance extensions expire on September 6. This crisis is far from over, and families deserve certainty that they can put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads. Families should not be at the mercy of constantly-shifting legislative timelines and ad hoc solutions.

There are several reasons to prioritize both recurring payments and enhanced unemployment insurance. First, these two forms of payments are effective together. Unemployment insurance has replaced lost income for millions who have lost their jobs. But millions of others do not qualify for unemployment insurance after seeing their hours reduced, switching to lower-paying jobs, or temporarily leaving the workforce to care for family members during the pandemic. Direct payments are crucial for supporting struggling families who aren't reached by unemployment insurance. An Urban Institute study [suggests](#) that a single direct payment of \$1,200 combined with an extension of enhanced unemployment insurance and other assistance could keep 12 million people out of poverty, and [adding a second direct payment](#) could keep an additional 6.3 million people above the poverty line.

Second, data shows that direct payments and enhanced unemployment insurance are among the most effective forms of relief available. Not only do these payments help [keep families out of poverty](#), but they act as economic stimulus by [increasing spending](#) and [supporting jobs](#). When the CARES Act relief checks ran out, [poverty rose](#), and many families saw spiraling debt. Automatic stabilizers will give families certainty that more relief is coming, allowing them to make the best decisions about how to spend their relief payments as they receive them. Families shouldn't have to worry about whether they'll have enough money to pay for essentials in the months ahead as the country continues to fight a global pandemic. Almost [six in ten](#) people say the \$1,400 payments set to be included in the rescue package will last them less than three months.

Third, recurring direct payments have wide support from both the general public and economic experts. Polling [shows](#) 65 percent of Americans support recurring cash payments “for the duration of the pandemic.” This includes support from 54 percent of Republicans and 60 percent of independents. Economists support the idea too. More than [150 economists](#) recently wrote an open letter supporting automatic stabilizers as part of a strong recovery and warning against repeating the mistakes of the Great Recession, when an insufficient response led to unnecessary suffering, particularly among low-income workers.

As you have said, now is the time for boldness. As you prepare your Build Back Better plan for long-term economic recovery, know that we are ready to work with you in support of recurring direct checks and extended unemployment insurance benefits to support Americans who are still struggling during the pandemic.

Sincerely,

[/s/ Ron Wyden](#)

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

[/s/ Elizabeth Warren](#)

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

[/s/ Alex Padilla](#)

Alex Padilla
United States Senator

[/s/ Bernard Sanders](#)

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

[/s/ Michael F. Bennet](#)

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

[/s/ Edward J. Markey](#)

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

[/s/ Cory A. Booker](#)

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

[/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand](#)

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

[/s/ Sherrod Brown](#)

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

[/s/ Tammy Baldwin](#)

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

[/s/ Richard Blumenthal](#)

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

[/s/ Brian Schatz](#)

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

[/s/ Debbie Stabenow](#)

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United States Senator

[/s/ Gary C. Peters](#)

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

[/s/ Ben Ray Luján](#)

Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator

[/s/ Sheldon Whitehouse](#)

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[/s/ Richard J. Durbin](#)

Richard J. Durbin
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[/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley](#)

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[/s/ Tammy Duckworth](#)

Tammy Duckworth
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[/s/ Mazie K. Hirono](#)

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

[/s/ Jack Reed](#)

Jack Reed
United States Senator