

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

July 20, 2020

Dear Colleague:

As the Senate returns from the state work period, we are once again confronted with the monumental task of responding to the COVID-19 health and economic crises. It has been over three months since the Republican-led Senate has considered major COVID-relief legislation while Americans face perhaps the greatest public health threat since 1918 and the greatest economic challenge since the Great Depression. While the Democratic-led House has acted, and Senate Democrats continue to press our colleagues to provide relief for families and workers, Senate Republicans have been missing in action.

Before this state work period, our caucus took to the floor to demand aid to state, local, and tribal governments; coronavirus testing; and supporting our nation's childcare and education systems. Senate Republicans blocked each of our attempts. Now, Leader McConnell has said that he wants to write the next coronavirus legislation behind the closed doors of his office. From what we understand from press reports, Leader McConnell's bill will prioritize corporate special interests over workers and main street businesses, and will fail to adequately address the worsening spread of the Coronavirus. This one-party approach to this legislation is the same approach that delayed the passage of the CARES Act and the subsequent interim emergency relief legislation, failed on policing reform, and it won't work this time around either.

In fact, we began to learn more on Friday about Senator McConnell's highest priority for this bill: a sweeping new multi-sector corporate immunity proposal that would have the federal government preempt the laws of all 50 states and grant legal immunity to negligent corporations, nursing homes or others that fail to take reasonable steps to avoid spreading the virus

Workers and families, not special interests, should be our main focus. The Congressional Budget Office estimates the unemployment rate will remain distressingly high for many more years. Unfortunately, by all accounts the Senate Republicans are drafting legislation that comes up short in a number of vital areas, such as extending unemployment benefits or funding for rental assistance, hazard premium pay for frontline workers, or investments in communities of color being ravaged by the virus, and many other necessary provisions. Democrats will need to fight hard for these important provisions.

Although the next coronavirus legislation is critical to our nation's recovery, the Trump Administration can and should be taking much more aggressive action to contain the virus. Unfortunately, the President continues to deny the severity of the pandemic, as he did yet again during his interview on Fox News Sunday. He still has no adequate national testing strategy and continues to under-utilize the Defense Production Act, wasting valuable time and resources. While Senate Democrats continuously push the President to take action, Senate Republicans refuse to pressure the president of their party or take action on their own. To make matters even worse, the President is reportedly now urging Republicans to block additional ~~eur~~ funding for testing – a cynical gambit that appears to be part of the President's efforts to suppress data and hide his catastrophic response to the pandemic. That is unacceptable. This week, Democrats will again highlight the need for use of the Defense Production Act and a national testing and PPE strategy to give our nation's medical professionals the tools they need to manage this crisis.

During the debate over the CARES Act, it was our unity against a partisan, Republican first draft that allowed for significant improvements to be made—improvements that have benefited millions upon millions of Americans. I hope we will not have to repeat that process. But we will stand together again if we must. Our Democratic colleagues in the House are ready to work and we know that a bipartisan, bicameral process will result in a much better bill for the American people.

Thank you for your continued leadership and I look forward to working with you all in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles Schumer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senator