

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 25, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader, House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leaders:

As you work on legislation to address the public health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to take action to strengthen federal assistance to those receiving continued health coverage under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA). Given the expected increased demand for COBRA coverage in the coming weeks, it is imperative that we provide stability for Americans to preserve their existing health coverage and continuity of care during this unprecedented health emergency.

As our nation's public health officials have emphasized, it is important that all Americans have access to care if they have been exposed to the coronavirus or are showing symptoms consistent with COVID-19. COBRA coverage, which provides unemployed Americans temporary access to their former employer's health insurance, helps meet this need. Ensuring that COBRA coverage is affordable is key to meeting the public health and economic challenges that any legislative response to the current crisis should demand.

Under current law, millions of unemployed Americans with COBRA coverage are required to pay 100% of their employer's share of their healthcare costs, which can result in thousands of additional dollars in costs annually. This represents a significant financial burden during a time of unprecedented uncertainty. Americans are already experiencing job loss as a result of the pandemic, and the current high cost of COBRA insurance means that many will be forced to go without health insurance if this situation is not addressed. During the Great Recession, the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided federal premium assistance subsidies for COBRA health coverage, and this assistance was extended further by Congress into 2010.

Providing similar assistance as part of the COVID-19 legislative response would target economic relief toward workers in sectors that will be severely impacted by this pandemic, support continuity of care for those impacted by economic disruption, and substantially improve our national response to COVID-19. We urge you to include a federal program to subsidize COBRA continuation of coverage for workers who lose health care coverage due to loss of a job or a reduction in hours in upcoming legislation.

Thank you for your efforts and assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Fred Upton
Member of Congress

Additional Signers

Bobby L. Rush
Barbara Lee
Colin Z. Allred
Tim Ryan
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Tim Walberg
Chris Pappas
James P. McGovern
Ann McLane Kuster
Diana DeGette
Earl Blumenauer
Steve Cohen
John Moolenaar
Ami Bera, M.D.
David Trone
Jack Bergman
Bill Foster
John Yarmuth
Haley M. Stevens
Raúl M. Grijalva
Brenda L. Lawrence
Jamie Raskin
Jan Schakowsky
Bill Huizenga
Jim Himes
Katie Porter