May 14, 2020

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

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

Re: The House Must Pass the HEROES Act

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

With each passing day, thousands of Americans continue to get sick and die as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In numbers not seen since the Great Depression, millions are losing their jobs, putting at risk the well-being and livelihoods of countless families. Through it all, Latinos and other communities of color continue to face the brunt of this suffering. That is why the pandemic and economic relief included in the HEROES Act is urgently needed to address these challenges. While the bill does not fully meet the urgent COVID-19-related needs of Latinos and their families, it represents significant progress in meaningfully reducing the disproportionate impact they are facing in this unprecedented crisis. On behalf of UnidosUS, I strongly urge House Members to vote in support of the “Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act.”

UnidosUS is the nation’s largest Latino civil rights and advocacy organization. Several of our relief priorities—including in the critical areas of health, income support, and nutrition—are included in the legislation. The HEROES Act advances our public health by expanding free access to COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccines, regardless of immigration status, and makes additional critical investments in care for the uninsured. The bill bolsters our economic security by providing additional cash payments to individuals and their dependents, including future and retroactive payments for ITIN holders and mixed-status families, correcting a flaw in the CARES Act that left out some taxpaying families.

The bill also honors all essential workers, including farmworkers critical to our food supply, by providing them premium “hazard” pay. To keep people in their homes, it provides $100 billion for the Emergency Rental Assistance program and hundreds of millions of dollars for housing counseling and support for homeowners. The bill also increases the Medicaid program’s federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) to states, and to ensure that people do not go hungry the maximum and minimum monthly benefits for SNAP are increased and investments in child nutrition, school meals, and food banks are included. It also empowers our students and
teachers by providing $58 billion in state grants for K–12 educational agencies, and stabilizes our workforce by providing work permits (“deferred action”) for undocumented workers in essential critical infrastructure, including health care, public safety, and agricultural workers. This aid will make a significant difference for people who are most in need.

We recognize that the HEROES Act is not perfect; for example, it does not expand health coverage to many who are uninsured; lift the five-year waiting period for lawful permanent residents to access Medicaid, CHIP, or much-needed SNAP benefits; provide unemployment insurance for essential undocumented workers; or invest comprehensively in language access across all health and relief programs for individuals with limited English-speaking ability. Nonetheless, the legislation is a major step in the right direction and would provide critical support to workers and families who have so far been denied relief.

For these reasons, UnidosUS urges House Members to vote in support of the HEROES Act and oppose any motion to recommit that would delay the passage of the bill or aim to divide us over dog-whistle politics, like immigration. The pandemic has made it clearer than ever: our health and economic well-being are interconnected, and the health care and economic relief passed by Congress must be as inclusive as possible to give us the greatest chance of putting this crisis behind us.

At this stage of the pandemic, the stakes are high. The American people deserve a strong, bipartisan vote in support of this package to help spur its passage through the House and Senate and eventual signature by the President.

Sincerely,

Janet Murguía
President and CEO
UnidosUS