



Summary of Federal Legislation Passed in Response to COVID-19

By Luisa Altmann

This *issue brief* provides a summary of the federal legislation that was passed in response to the COVID-19, or coronavirus, public health emergency.

H.R. 6074: Emergency Funding

The Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2020 was signed into law on March 6, 2020. The bill provides emergency funding for the following federal agencies to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus outbreak.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) was appropriated \$6.5 billion for use by the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and for the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund. This money is to be used for a variety of purposes, including: grants for states and local health service providers to carry out preparedness and response activities; funding to advance medical countermeasures, vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics; support for the production of medical supplies and medical surge capacity; and worker-based training to prevent and reduce exposure of hospital employees, emergency first responders, and other workers who are at risk of exposure to COVID-19.

The State Department was appropriated \$1.3 billion to be used for a variety of purposes related to international needs associated with the coronavirus

pandemic, including maintaining consular operations; reimbursement of evacuation expenses; support of global health programs overseen by the U.S. Agency for International Development; and other international support.

Finally, the Small Business Administration was appropriated \$20 million for the Disaster Loans Program, which provides low-interest loans to help businesses, renters, and homeowners recover from the economic impact of declared disasters.

The bill expands coverage of telehealth services by Medicare. Read more about these services [here](#).

H.R. 6201: Families First

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act was signed into law on March 18, 2020. The bill expands and increases funding for services designed to assist individuals and families negatively impacted by the COVID-19 emergency.

Food assistance. The bill provides \$1.25 billion in supplemental funding to programs aimed at providing food assistance to individuals in need during the COVID-19 public health emergency, including the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Emergency Food Assistance Program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Administration for Community Living for the elderly, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the National School Lunch Program. This includes funding to ensure low-income

students receive meals and snacks while schools are closed due to the pandemic.

COVID-19 testing and services. The bill includes an appropriation of \$1.2 billion for COVID-19 testing and services for a variety of populations, including individuals who are uninsured. The bill also requires private health insurance companies to cover COVID-19 testing without imposing any cost-sharing.

Paid leave. The bill expands the U.S. Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 to allow certain employees to take leave to care for their child while school or childcare is closed due to COVID-19. Leave taken in excess of ten days must be paid. The bill also requires employers to provide up to two weeks of paid sick leave for any employees unable to work due to circumstances related to COVID-19. The law applies to employers with 500 or fewer employees, though those with 50 or fewer employees may qualify for an exemption. Employers are eligible for certain tax credits based on leave wages paid. These provisions are in effect through December 31, 2020.

Unemployment support. The bill provides \$1 billion in grants to assist states that meet certain conditions in responding to the increased demands for unemployment insurance benefits.

Additional resources. Additional information about this bill can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

H.R. 748: CARES Act

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law on March 27, 2020. The bill made a variety of changes to support different areas of the U.S. economy impacted by the COVID-19 emergency and provide supports to the health care system.

Individual assistance. The bill provides a variety of supports to individuals negatively impacted by the COVID-19 emergency. The bill provides

payments of up to \$1,200 per person, plus \$500 per child, which are phased out above certain income levels. The bill also expands federally funded unemployment benefits to allow additional individuals impacted by COVID-19 to receive benefits, provides an additional \$600 per week in benefits, and allows for an additional 13 weeks of benefits. Changes to the taxation on retirement plan withdrawals, payments on federally-backed mortgage loans, and federal student loan deferrals were also made to provide additional assistance.

Business assistance. The bill creates a \$500 billion fund from which the Treasury Department can provide loans, loan guarantees, and other investments to eligible businesses, states, and municipalities that have incurred losses as a result of coronavirus. The bill also makes a variety of tax policy changes to provide assistance to businesses of all sizes that have been negatively impacted.

The bill includes appropriations of more than \$370 billion to the Small Business Administration for various support programs to help small businesses cover ongoing operating expenses, including employee paychecks, and remain operational through the public health emergency. More information about the resources available for small businesses can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Health care system supports. A significant portion of the bill is dedicated to increasing supports for the health care system. This includes methods to increase the supply of critical medical supplies, \$1.32 billion to be used for grants to health centers that service medically underserved populations, and increasing supports for telehealth and rural health services.

Direct payments to states. The bill creates a \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund for states, tribes, and local governments in proportion to population. These funds are intended to cover unanticipated expenditures incurred due to the COVID-19 emergency.

Other appropriations. Finally, the bill provides additional funding to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the COVID-19 emergency. Some of the larger appropriations include an additional \$127 billion for the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund, \$45 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Agency Disaster Relief Fund, \$31 billion for the Education Stabilization Fund, and an additional \$24.6 billion for SNAP and child nutrition programs.

Additional resources. Additional information about this bill can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

H.R. 266: Additional Relief Funding

The Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act was signed into law on April 24, 2020. The bill provides additional funding for small business assistance programs and COVID-19 testing.

Small business assistance. The bill allocates an additional \$310 billion in funding for loans through the Paycheck Protection Program, which was originally created in the CARES Act and is administered by the Small Business Administration. The bill requires a certain portion of these loans be made by smaller financial institutions. The bill also allocates an additional \$20 billion in funding for Economic Injury Disaster Loans and Emergency Grants and makes agricultural enterprises with no more than 500 employees eligible for this program. The bill appropriates an additional \$50 billion to the Disaster Loans Program.

Health care and COVID-19 testing funding. The bill appropriates an additional \$75 billion to the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund to reimburse eligible health care providers for health care-related expenses or lost revenues that are attributable to coronavirus. The bill also appropriates an additional \$25 billion to the same fund to be used to research, develop, validate, manufacture, purchase, administer, and expand

capacity for COVID-19 testing. Of that amount, \$11 billion is designated for states, tribes, and localities.

H.R. 133: 2021 Federal Appropriations

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 was signed into law on December 27, 2020. The bill provides for general federal government appropriations through September 2021 and includes \$900 billion in various forms of COVID-19 pandemic relief, as outlined below.

Stimulus payments. The bill provides payments of up to \$600 per person, plus \$600 per child. The stimulus payments are phased out above certain income levels.

Unemployment benefits. The bill extends the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program, which was created in the CARES Act, to provide 11 additional weeks, up to 50 total weeks, of unemployment benefits. The bill also recreates the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation Program, which was also created in the CARES Act and ended in July, to provide an additional \$300 per week in federally funded unemployment benefits through March 14, 2021. The bill also adds new identify verification and reporting requirements for state unemployment programs.

Small business assistance. The bill modifies and expands the Paycheck Protection Program and makes \$284 billion available for new, forgivable loans under the program. The bill appropriates an additional \$41 billion to other small business assistance programs, including \$15 billion in grants for operators of various types of live venues, museums, and movie theaters who have experienced at least a 25 percent reduction in revenues because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The bill establishes a \$9 billion program to support the efforts of low- and moderate-income community financial institutions to provide loans, grants, forbearance, and other supports to small

businesses, minority-owned businesses, and consumers in low-income and underserved communities. The bill appropriates an additional \$3 billion to community development financial institutions, which are intended to support economically-disadvantaged communities.

COVID-19 vaccine, testing, and research. The bill appropriates \$32 billion for the development, purchase, and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and other medical supplies and capacity. An additional \$22 billion is appropriated for testing, contact tracing, and other COVID-19 monitoring and suppression efforts. Additionally, the bill appropriates \$1.25 billion to the National Institutes of Health for research and clinical trials related to long-term studies of COVID-19.

Health care. The bill appropriates \$4.25 billion for substance abuse, suicide prevention, and other behavioral health programs. An additional \$3 billion is allocated to reimburse health care providers for COVID-related expenses and lost revenue.

Education and child care. The bill appropriates \$82 billion to various education funds and educational institutions. This funding is intended to support elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education. The bill also appropriates \$10 billion to support child care providers.

Transportation funding. The bill provides \$16 billion in support for airline workers and \$2 billion in grants for airports. The bill also appropriates \$14 billion for transit infrastructure grants, \$10 billion for highway infrastructure programs, and \$2 billion in grants for transportation service providers.

Rental assistance. The bill provides states and local governments with \$25 billion to provide rental and utility payment assistance and other housing stability services. The bill also extends the CDC eviction moratorium, which was initially in place

from September 4 through December 31, 2020, through January 31, 2021.

Agricultural programs. The bill provides \$11.2 billion in support for agricultural producers, growers, and processors that have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Of this amount, \$1.5 billion must be used to purchase and distribute food and agricultural products to individuals in need and for grants and loans to help small and mid-sized agricultural entities respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including to help pay for worker protection measures. The bill appropriates \$860 million to other support programs in the agriculture industry and \$700 million for various food assistance programs.

Additional provisions. The bill makes several additional changes and appropriations to other programs, such as the U.S. Postal Service, broadband service, and disaster relief. The bill also extends employers' eligibility for tax credits on any qualifying leave wages that are voluntarily paid through March 31, 2021, though the requirement that employers provide paid leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act ends on December 31, 2020.

Additional resources. Additional information about this bill can be found [here](#).