

COVID-19: How is Congress Addressing the Needs of Babies and Families?

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ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

In the past two weeks, Congress has considered two major funding packages to begin to address the spreading economic impact of COVID-19. *H.R. 6201 the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)* was signed into law on March 18, 2020 and *H.R. 748 the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES)* was signed by the president on March 27, 2020.

ZERO TO THREE continues to hear from families with infants and toddlers, as well as the child care providers who often care for them, about their experiences coping with financial worries and family stress, which often outstrip health concerns related to the virus itself. And we know from the science that how babies' experience the current crisis will profoundly shape their early development, with long-lasting impacts.

This analysis highlights components of the two packages that affect early care and learning, family economic needs, basic family needs, and community supports for families under stress.

EARLY CARE AND LEARNING SUPPORT

Child Care

- \$3.5 billion increase for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). Specifically, the provision:
 - Allows funds for continued payments and assistance in case of decreased enrollment or closures to ensure providers can remain or reopen, as appropriate;
 - Disregards requirements that states reserve significant portion of funding to serve low income working families on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), as well as children in underserved areas, infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and those needing care in nontraditional hours;
 - Encourages states to place conditions on payments to providers to ensure they use a portion of funds to continue to pay staff wages;
 - Authorizes use of funds to provide child care to health care sector employees, emergency responders, sanitation workers, and other essential workers without regard to normal eligibility requirements; and
 - Allows states to support providers not currently receiving CCDBG funding if they meet eligibility criteria.

Head Start

- \$750 million increase for Head Start and Early Head Start, including:
 - \$500 million is reserved for non-competitive supplemental summer grants to existing grantees, determined to be most ready to operate by Office of Head Start.

Small Business Administration Loans

- The Small Business provisions do not specifically mention or carve out allocations for child care programs. However, many child care providers would be eligible to apply; and
- \$349 billion for Small Business Administration Loans. Highlights include:
 - Non-profit, for-profit, and self-employed businesses with fewer than 500 employees will be eligible for a loan of up to \$10 million to cover the cost of employee salaries and benefits, mortgage, utilities, and interest on other debts. Interest rates on loans to businesses impacted by COVID-19 are capped at 4 percent;
 - Loan forgiveness for up to 8 weeks of payroll, mortgage, rent, and utility costs; and
 - Small businesses facing economic harm due to COVID may apply for an emergency Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) grant of up to \$10,000 to immediately cover certain costs, including providing paid sick leave to employees, maintaining payroll to retain employees during shutdowns or slowdowns, and making rent or mortgage payments.

ECONOMIC SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Emergency Paid Sick Leave

- Private businesses with < 500 employees and all public employers are required to provide 80 hours of emergency paid sick leave to employees that are unable to work or telework because they:
 - are subject to quarantine or isolation order;
 - have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to coronavirus concerns; or
 - are experiencing symptoms of coronavirus and seeking a medical diagnosis.
- These workers are entitled to their regular pay up to \$511/day and \$5,110 over the benefit period.
 - Part time workers also receive this benefit at a prorated rate based on the average number of hours that worker has worked in previous weeks; or
 - Workers also receive job protections if they take this time.
- Workers may use paid sick time if they are:
 - Caring for someone subject to COVID-related isolation;
 - Caring for a child if their school or child care provider is closed or unavailable;
 - Experiencing a substantially similar condition to COVID as defined by the secretary of HHS; or
 - These workers are entitled to 2/3 of their regular pay up to \$200/day and \$2,000 over the benefit period.

Emergency Paid Family and Medical Leave Expansion (Created by FFCRA)

- Private businesses with < 500 employees and all public employers are required to provide 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave.
 - The worker can use this leave to care for a child that is unable to attend school or child care because of closures or unavailability;
 - Workers are entitled to 2/3 of their wage during this time up to \$200/day and \$10,000 over the benefit period; or
 - Employers are not required to pay for the first 10 days taken, but the employee may use other paid leave during that period, if available.

Unemployment Insurance (UI)

- Coverage applies to:
 - A person who is not eligible for regular UI or has exhausted regular UI; and
 - self-employed people and those who would not normally be eligible for regular UI.
- Coverage does not include:
 - an individual who can telework with pay; nor
 - anyone receiving paid sick days or other paid leave benefits through an employer.
- Covered person must self-certify that they are willing and able to work within the meaning of state law, except that they are unemployed, partially employed, unable or unavailable to work because:
 - Diagnosed with COVID or has symptoms of COVID and is seeking a diagnosis;
 - Family member has been diagnosed with COVID;
 - Providing care to family member or someone in the individual's household who has been diagnosed with COVID;
 - Child or other person for which the person has primary caregiving responsibility has place of care or school closed as a result of COVID and the person needs that school or facility to be open in order to go to work;
 - Unable to reach employment because of COVID quarantine;
 - Unable to reach employment because a health provider has told the person to self-quarantine because of COVID; or
 - (Other reasons: person has now become primary breadwinner b/c of other breadwinner's death to COVID; had to quit work because of COVID; workplace is closed because of COVID).
- Direct payments to households with incomes up to \$150,000 and single individuals with incomes up to \$75,000 to help families make ends meet in the way of \$1,200 per adult and \$500 per qualifying child.

State & Local Funds

- \$150 billion in grants to state, local, and tribal governments through FY2020 through the Social Security Act. Specifically, the provision:
 - Reserves \$3 billion for Washington, DC, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa;
 - Reserves \$8 billion for tribes;
 - Provides formula grant funds to states based on relative population, with a minimum grant of \$1.25 billion. State funds are reduced by amount that local governments within states apply for and receive; and
 - Allows funds to be used to cover the costs of "any necessary expenditures" incurred due to the COVID-19 public health emergency that were not accounted for in the most recent budget year and were incurred between March 1 and December 30, 2020.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES UNDER STRESS

Child Welfare

- \$45 million for child welfare services under Part B-1 of Title IV of the Social Security Act, to promote child wellbeing and family stability. This provision disregards state match requirements; and
- \$45 million for Family Violence Prevention and Services Formula grants, disregarding state match requirements.

Community Service Block Grant (CSBG)

- \$1 billion increase for CSBG to augment its ability to reach community members in need. This provision:
 - Disregards 9% discretionary set-aside for community economic development, rural community development, and neighborhood innovation projects; and
 - Allows states to use CSBG funds for programs to serve families up to 200% FPL, up from 125% in current law, through FY21.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES' BASIC NEEDS

Child Nutrition

- \$8.8 billion in additional funding for Child Nutrition Programs to cover increased caseloads available until 9/30/21 to ensure children receive meals while school is not in session.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

- \$500 million in additional funding for WIC.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- \$15.8 billion in funding to cover increased caseloads and temporary benefit increases during the COVID emergency, to remain available until September 30, 2021, including:
 - \$100 million for food distribution program on Indian reservations;
 - \$200 million to provide grants to U.S. territories for nutrition assistance; and
 - Work and work training requirements are lifted for the SNAP program beginning April 2020.
- The Secretary of Agriculture:
 - will provide, at the request of a state agency, emergency allotments to SNAP households to address temporary food needs; and
 - may adjust issuance and reporting requirements to be consistent with what is practicable under actual conditions in affected areas.

Emergency Food Assistance Program

- \$850 million to remain available through 9/30/21 provided for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) to help food banks continue to assist those most in need.

Child Nutrition Response Act to Adjust for Disruption of Normal Nutrition Services (FFRCA):

- Establishes a nationwide waiver for states for the purposes of providing meals and meal supplements under a qualified program, including the school lunch program, with appropriate safety measures with respect to COVID-19;
- Grants a waiver to get food to families by allowing non-congregate feeding, permitting food to be served outside the school/care setting, under a child and adult food program with appropriate safety measures for COVID-19; and
- Grants a waiver to adjust meal nutritional content normally required under some food programs if necessary due to COVID-19 related supply chain disruption with respect to foods served in such programs.

Rental Assistance Protections

- \$3 billion provided for housing providers to help low-income households assisted by HUD to safely remain in their homes or access temporary housing assistance, including:
 - \$1.9 billion to remain available until expended allow PHAs to keep section 8 and public housing;
 - \$1 billion to remain available until expended to allow the continuation of housing assistance contracts with private landlords for project-based section 8 households;
 - \$65 million for housing for the elderly and persons with disabilities for rental assistance, service coordinators, and support services; and
 - \$65 million to remain available until 9/30/21 for Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS to maintain rental assistance.

Emergency Solutions Grants

- \$4 billion to remain available through 9/30/22 to address the impact of COVID-19 among individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and to support additional homeless assistance, prevention, and eviction prevention assistance; and
- Eviction prevention activities can include rapid rehousing, housing counseling, and rental deposit assistance.

Tribal Housing

- \$300 million for Native American Programs, including:
 - \$200 million for the Indian Housing Block Grant program; and
 - \$100 million for imminent threats to health and safety as a result of COVID-19.

Evictions and Foreclosures

- Temporary moratorium on evictions and foreclosures for homeowners and renters in federally subsidized apartments and homes with federally backed mortgages.

Energy Assistance

- \$900 million for the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program to help with paying energy bills and meeting energy crises.