

American Working Family Relief Action

We are unions, advocacy organizations, faith leaders, and community members whose work serves millions of working Pennsylvanians. We, along with those we serve, are deeply concerned for the safety and well-being of our communities. Working people across the country, including people on the front lines of our healthcare, childcare, and human services systems, our schools, our hospitality and food services and our airports, face an increased risk of exposure to COVID-19. Working families, many uninsured or under-insured, will be disproportionately harmed by the necessary closures of schools and workplaces in this time of crisis.

No matter what we look like, where we live, or what's in our wallets, getting sick reminds us that at our core we are all just human. COVID-19 is preventable and most who have been infected have recovered from it. But the lasting damage from this pandemic can only be avoided if the health and economic well-being of working people are at the center of the decisions being made by policymakers at all levels of government, as well as private-sector employers.

We pull through by pulling together, like we have done in the past, and sacrificing in the midst of this immense challenge to our nation. That sacrifice must be shouldered by all of us. But without immediate action by the government and the private sector, the burden will fall on our most vulnerable and working families who are already struggling to survive.

We call on federal, state, and local government leaders and the private sector to take every possible action to implement policies to contain the spread of COVID-19 and alleviate the health and financial burden on working families and our most vulnerable communities:

Expansion of Healthcare Access:

- Fully paid leave for any COVID-19 related issue, including sick time, furlough, self-quarantine, and providing care to infected family members;
- Free COVID-19 testing and treatment, regardless of insurance status, language, race, country of origin, or immigration status;
- No profits from this crisis. Private corporations providing public health services must do so at no cost, and any eventual vaccine must be made available cost-free to the public.
- Protections from disciplinary action from employers against workers who utilize sick time or leave due to COVID-19 related issues;
- Expansion of Medicaid to all Pennsylvanians without insurance until the end of 2020.
- Waive all cost sharing for emergency room (in or out of network), urgent care (in network), and office visits (in network) associated with medically necessary screening and testing (in and out of laboratories) for Covid-19.

continued

Protection of Front-line Workers and Communities:

- Emergency funding for safety equipment and mental health supports for front-line healthcare workers, direct support professionals, and first responders;
- Emergency standards and accountability for healthcare facilities to implement containment control plans;
- Suspension of foot traffic to public and community facilities, where operationally feasible and legally permissible. When not feasible/permissible, limitations of foot traffic to the greatest extent possible by shifting public services with online and in-person options to online-only. Promotion of teleworking options for public and private sector employees;
- Regular cleaning of workplaces that remain open to workers and/or the public in a manner that meets or exceeds federal and state standards for preventing COVID-19;

Economic Relief for Working Families

- Doubling unemployment compensation and extending the length of the benefit to 52 weeks, eliminating the “waiting week” and waiving the requirement to search for work for COVID-19 related layoffs and closures, and increased staffing to allow the rapid processing of new unemployment applications;
- Suspension of foreclosures, utility shutoffs, evictions, credit defaults, school loan payments, and other liens for workers who may be laid off or have reduced hours for the duration of the national public health emergency;
- Enhancement of food security programs for Pennsylvania’s working families, the elderly, and children by increasing funding for nutrition assistance programs;
- Review and revision of public benefit and unemployment compensation eligibility requirements to ensure that low-income, seasonal, contract, and gig workers are not adversely affected by the pandemic;
- Continuation of pay and benefits for hourly K-12 School District employees, along with salaried employees, during any school shutdowns;
- Continuation of pay for contracted workers, such as those employed by food service contractors, during any campus shutdowns ordered by the colleges and universities where they work, including PASSHE and state-supported colleges and universities, as well as non-public colleges and universities;
- Return to work protections for those who utilize unemployment compensation or leave work due to childcare, school, or other temporary closures;
- Assessment of benefits such as paid sick leave and unemployment compensation for tipped workers based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ calculation of \$11.85 as their hourly rate;
- Establish free and reliable access to telecommunication tools so that workers can work remotely by ensuring internet providers waive fees for the duration of the crisis and cell phone companies provide free mobile hotspots through every cell phone.

Protection of our Values, Safety, and Voices

- Expansion of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission to properly investigate attacks on Pennsylvania's Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, as well as to educate, and inform the public to prevent discrimination that may result as a result of this pandemic;
- Implementation of aggressive legal and regulatory measures to prevent price gouging for common household goods, especially those necessary to prevent and treat COVID-19;
- Necessary resources to protect our democracy and ensure all people have the ability to be counted and make their voice heard, including the 2020 Census and ongoing elections;
- Ensuring fair and accessible elections in Pennsylvania during the pandemic by mailing all voters a ballot with postage paid return.

Supporting Organizations (list in formation)

AFSCME 1199C	Pennsylvania Health Access Network
AFSCME Council 13	Pennsylvania Joint Board, Workers United, SEIU
Allegheny - Fayette Labor Council	Pennsylvania Stands Up
Asian Americans United	Pennsylvania United
Bend the Arc	Pennsylvania Working Families Party
CASA	Pittsburghers for Public Transit
Casa San Jose	Planned Parenthood
Center for Coalfield Justice	POWER
Coalition of Low Income Pennsylvanians	Pride at Work Pennsylvania
Domestic Workers Alliance	Rainbow Rose LGBTQIA+ Resource Center of York
For our Future PA	Restaurant Opportunities Center PA
HELP: MLP	SEIU 668
Just Harvest	SEIU 32BJ
Keystone Research Center	SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania
One Pennsylvania	SEIU Pennsylvania State Council
Pennsylvania Alliance for Retired Americans	Tenant Union Representative Network
Pennsylvania Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA)	Toward Racial Justice Task Force of Lower
Pennsylvania AFL-CIO	Susquehanna Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP)	UNITE HERE Local 274
Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center	UFCW 1776KS
Pennsylvania Council of Churches	VietLead
	We the People
	York County Interfaith Justice Coalition