

## Can you explain what Congress has done so far?

### Phase I

On March 5, Congress passed a bipartisan bill that appropriated \$8.3 billion in funding to improve the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act includes:

- \$3 billion for the research and development of vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics to prevent or treat the effects of coronavirus;
- \$2.2 billion for federal, state, and local public health agencies for prevention, preparedness, and response;
- Nearly \$1 billion to purchase pharmaceuticals and medical supplies, in support of healthcare preparedness and Community Health Centers, and to improve medical surge capacity;
- \$61 million for the Food and Drug Administration to respond to coronavirus, including developing medical products;
- \$1.25 billion to prevent and respond to the outbreak abroad;
- \$1 billion in loan subsidies to be made available to help small businesses, non-profit organizations, small agricultural cooperatives and small aquaculture producers that have suffered financial losses stemming from the outbreak. The Small Business Administration could provide an estimated \$7 billion in loans to these entities using this funding. Please visit the Small Business Administration's website for further information about [Disaster Assistance in Response to the Coronavirus](#); and
- Measures to ensure that the government can purchase vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics at a fair and reasonable price.

You can review a section-by-section summary of the bill [here](#).

### Phase II

On the heels of that relief package, Congress passed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. This bill will ensure every American that needs to get tested for the coronavirus can do so, and will protect families' economic, food, and health security.

- **For families' health security:** The bill ensures that free tests will be available for all Americans that need one, at no cost. This includes those with private insurance, Medicare, Medicare Advantage, Medicaid, CHIP, TRICARE, VA coverage, as well as the uninsured.
- **For families' economic security:** The legislation requires employers with under 500 employees to guarantee up to two weeks of paid leave for sick workers, and gives workers with children that have impacted by the pandemic the ability to take up to 12

weeks of job-protected paid leave. The bill also provides \$1 billion to states to expand their Unemployment Insurance programs.

- **For families' food security:** The bill allocates \$500 million for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC) to ensure that low-income pregnant women or mothers with young children who lose their jobs or are laid off due to COVID-19 can access nutritious food. To support food banks, the bill provides \$400 million to the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which will allow local food banks to purchase and distribute nutritious meals to low-income Americans. In addition, it provides funding to ensure students whose schools are closed can eat, home-bound seniors can get meals delivered to them, and SNAP recipients won't face harsh work requirements.
- **For businesses' security:** The bill includes tax relief for small and medium-sized businesses that fulfill their obligations to provide paid sick, family, and medical leave to workers.

In the days and weeks ahead, the House will work to advance additional legislation that aims to contain the virus and mitigate its impact on working families.

For more information, please review the House Appropriations Committee's summaries of the [bill](#) and its [amended text](#).

To find additional information on the medical leave and emergency leave mandates, employee protections, and employer exclusions in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, please visit the Department of Labor's [Frequently Asked Questions page](#).

### Phase III

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which Congress passed March 28, is a big step toward addressing Americans' pressing economic concerns. While not perfect, this wide-ranging rescue package provides rapid and meaningful relief for individuals, businesses, and those responding to the pandemic on the ground.

- **\$150 Billion State and Local Coronavirus Relief Fund:** Creates a \$150 billion State and Local Coronavirus Relief Fund to support the response by states and localities to the coronavirus pandemic. Connecticut could receive nearly \$1.4 billion in desperately needed funds to benefit our state's residents.
- **\$260 Billion in Dramatically Expanded Unemployment Benefits:** Includes numerous provisions to improve unemployment benefits including providing an additional \$600 per week for the next four months, providing an additional 13 weeks of federally funded benefits, and expanding eligibility to include workers in the gig economy and self-employed workers.
- **Direct Monetary Payments:** Provides for immediate, direct cash payments to lower-and middle-income Americans of \$1,200 for each adult and \$500 for each child, beginning to phase out at an annual income of \$75,000 for an individual and \$150,000 for a

household. These payments will provide individuals with the cash they need right now to survive with much of the economy currently shut down.

- **More Than \$375 Billion in Small Business Relief:** Provides more than \$375 billion in small business relief, including \$349 billion for forgivable loans to small businesses to pay their employees and keep them on the payroll; \$17 billion for debt relief for current and new SBA borrowers; and \$10 billion in immediate disaster grants.
- **Approximately \$200 Billion for Our Hospitals, Health Care Workers, and Health Research:** Provides an investment of about \$200 billion in our hospitals, health systems, and health research, including expanding funding for the personal protective equipment desperately needed by our health care workers, including ventilators, n95 masks, gowns, gloves, etc.

### **Increased Funding for Key Programs**

- \$900 million for LIHEAP to help lower-income households heat and cool their homes.
- \$450 million for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) to assist food banks across the country.
- \$8.8 billion for child nutrition programs, such as the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, the Special Milk Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Summer Food Service Program.
- \$15.8 billion for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to ensure vulnerable populations can access meals.
- More than \$7 billion for affordable housing, \$4 billion of which will assist individuals and families who are homeless or receiving homelessness prevention assistance to help combat the impacts of the coronavirus outbreak.
- \$1.25 billion for Section 8 vouchers to preserve Section 8 voucher rental assistance for seniors, the disabled, and low-income working families, who will experience loss of income from the coronavirus.
- \$1 billion for Project-Based Rental Assistance. This involves HUD directly contracting with private landlords to provide affordable homes to low-income tenants at certain properties.
- \$50 million for Housing for the Elderly. This funding provides capital advances to private, non-profit sponsors to finance the development of housing for elderly residents.
- \$15 million for Housing for People with Disabilities. These funds provide interest-free capital advances and operating subsidies to non-profit developers of affordable housing for persons with disabilities and provide project rental assistance to state housing agencies.

Please [click here](#) to learn more about how the CARES Act bolsters public health preparedness, improves telehealth process, ensures COVID-19 coverage and affordability, and supports community health providers.