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United States Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer  
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January 13, 2021

Mr. President-Elect, Leader Schumer, and Speaker Pelosi:

As the incoming administration and new Congress outline plans to fully respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic crisis, we urge you to reinstate and expand the emergency COVID paid leave programs that expired at the end of last year. The United States is among the few developed countries that do not have a national paid sick days and paid family and medical leave policy. Over eight in ten working Americans lack access to comprehensive paid leave. The dire effects of this reality have never been more pronounced than they are now as a result of the pandemic. We need people who are sick to be able to afford to stay home in order to curb the spread of the virus, and to keep their jobs to be able to provide for their families.

New data on job losses released on Friday revealed that employers cut 140,000 jobs in December. [Every single job lost](#) belonged to a woman. Men, comparatively, gained 16,000 jobs. A separate [survey of households](#) gives us more painful insight into these figures. It was Black women and Latinas who lost their jobs; white women made gains.

Women of color not only work in some of the hardest hit sectors of our economy, they are [more likely](#) to be working for employers who do not provide paid leave or in occupations that can not be done remotely. Without emergency paid leave, even more women of color could lose their livelihoods. Those losses would come on top of the staggering job losses women have suffered throughout the pandemic. By the end of the 2020, [5.4 million](#) fewer women were working than were in February 2020.

A [report](#) from the Center for American Progress estimates that “the risk of mothers leaving the labor force and reducing work hours in order to assume caretaking responsibilities amounts to \$64.5 billion per year in lost wages and economic activity.” As a nation, we morally and financially cannot afford for any more

women to exit the economy. Any serious attempt at economic recovery will need to include emergency paid leave to help working women keep their jobs and balance the demands of work and family during the pandemic.

We fought to create the national emergency paid leave program with the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* because we knew paid leave would be critical to addressing both the health and economic crises COVID-19 has created. Emergency paid leave passed in March with bipartisan support and, while it provided a mere fraction of what was needed to address this problem, the results were immediate and irrefutable.

It gave an estimated 22 million workers nationwide the ability to stay home when they were sick without losing a paycheck or their job. That's a public health necessity when combatting an infectious disease like COVID-19, and it made a huge difference in states across the nation. A recent study in [Health Affairs](#) found that the paid leave provisions helped prevent about 15,000 COVID-19 infections per day. As we face a new highly infectious variant of COVID-19 and rising case numbers, not only can we not afford to abandon a policy that keeps workers, their families, and communities safe, but we must expand these policies to cover more workers

Congress can significantly increase the success of the emergency paid leave program simply by closing the loopholes in the previously passed policy—including by removing exemptions for the largest corporations in the world that left 75 percent of workers unable to access emergency leave. If we do not reenact and expand emergency paid leave to all workers and also move towards permanent national paid leave policies, even more working people will be forced, once again, to make impossible choices between staying home when sick or when they need to care for their family and earning a paycheck.

We must take bold and aggressive steps to address the health and economic crises we are facing. Extending and expanding emergency paid leave is a step that will allow us to address both crises at once. We look forward to working with you to ensure it is included in the next coronavirus response legislative package.

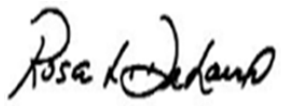
Sincerely,



U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand



U.S. Senator Patty Murray



Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro



Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley