

### Overview

The Biden-Harris Administration and the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress are confronting an unprecedented set of interlocking crises not seen in generations. While battling COVID-19 and restoring the American economy will undoubtedly be top priorities for the federal government, there remains the possibility to build a stronger structural foundation for communities across the nation, particularly communities of color, and address the root causes of deeply entrenched inequity.

The [Center for Community Resilience](#) (CCR) is a network of dozens of organizations working in seven states and the District of Columbia. The following policy considerations are based on the experience of CCR communities around the country. The CCR network urges federal policy makers to focus on how the federal response can further support child, family and community resilience and advance racial equity.

### Considerations for the Biden-Harris Administration and Congress

The Biden-Harris Administration and Congress can quickly accelerate measures that ensure a pathway to equitable recovery, including passage of a robust COVID-19 economic rescue relief package with key provisions focused on economic supports, eviction prevention, food insecurity, childcare services, and targeted supports for the hardest-hit communities and communities of color.

- **Streamline and get stimulus money into the hands of individuals who have not received their direct payments in previous disbursement rounds.** The Treasury Department could pay particular attention to those lacking a bank account or permanent address. This focus ensures that any relief gets to the most vulnerable, including mixed immigration status families, individuals with state-owned child support arrears, and older children. While CCR members support targeted checks with income phaseout, this latest installment can be viewed as the next

#### *The Intersection of COVID-19 and Disparities*

- 450,000 lives lost in the U.S. with Latinx, Black and Native Americans maintaining a death rate double that of white Americans.<sup>1</sup>
- Race and ethnicity a proxy for other underlying conditions that affect health including socioeconomic status, access to health care, and exposure to the virus related to occupation, (e.g., frontline, essential, and critical infrastructure workers).<sup>2</sup>
- COVID-19 disproportionately impacts working women (i.e., workers earning low wages ~ \$10.93 per hour).<sup>1</sup> Black women and Hispanic/Latina women represent the largest slice of low wage work (54% and 64% respectively).<sup>3</sup>
- U.S. is at further risk of losing an estimated \$64.5 billion from women's aggregate lost wages due to the lack of childcare services and their need to reduce hours or leave the workforce altogether.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>APM Research Lab. *The Color of Coronavirus: COVID-19 Deaths by Race and Ethnicity in the U.S.* January 7, 2021. Available at <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race>

<sup>2</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. COVID-19 Hospitalization and Death by Race/Ethnicity. November 30, 2020. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>

<sup>3</sup>Lucia Mutikani. *COVID-19 savages U.S. economy, 2020 performance worst in 74 years.* Reuters. January 28, 2021. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-economy/covid-19-wreaks-havoc-on-u-s-economy-2020-performance-worst-in-74-years-idUSKBN29X0I8>

<sup>4</sup>Julie Kashen and Levi Bohanan. *How COVID-19 Relief for the Care Economy Fell Short in 2020.* The Century Foundation. January 27, 2021.

action in a more comprehensive strategy to address the real-time economic troubles facing Americans.

- **Boost unemployment assistance to \$400 a week through the end of the fiscal year**, including those in the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation program who have already exhausted their regular state jobless payments. This would provide much-needed assistance to self-employed persons, gig workers, and independent contractors who are acutely affected by economic uncertainty.
- **Mitigate the impact of food insecurity through increases in the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program and fund an additional \$3 billion to help women, infants and children**. A January 2021 Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey reports that an estimated 29 million U.S. adults did not have enough food to eat in the prior seven days.<sup>5</sup> This grave issue disproportionately impacts Black and Latinx households with children.
- **Ensure an equitable recovery by providing flexible funds that can be used to address community-identified drivers of adversity**. Congress could extend and expand funding through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). Funds provided by the CARES Act through these block grants have allowed communities the flexibility to address community-level drivers of adversity and advance equity. Congress should also consider allocating funds through the Social Services Block Grants (SSBG) to provide another source of flexible safety net funding that can be leveraged in the hardest-hit communities.
- **Extend certain programmatic and administrative flexibilities**. The Department of Health and Human Services and other agencies could make permanent flexibilities that have allowed for the provision of certain services, including telehealth and home visiting, virtually.
- **Disaggregate and report data related to COVID-19 and the economic recovery by race/ethnicity**. Federal agencies overseeing COVID-19 relief funds could collect and report data disaggregated by race and ethnicity and provide public reports examining the impact of relief on communities of color.
- **Ensure that child-serving systems can provide trauma-informed supports**. Social isolation caused by school closures and public health stay-at-home orders, combined with increased economic hardship and stress, are very likely to increase child trauma and exposure to adverse childhood experiences, such as abuse or neglect. Congress could ensure that future funds directed to schools, childcare providers and other child- and family-serving systems can be used to implement trauma-informed supports in those settings and provide mental health supports to children, their caregivers, and the workforce of those systems. In addition, Congress can increase funding for the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, which provides guidance and technical assistance to communities in addressing and preventing child trauma, and SAMHSA's Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education), which supports school districts in implementing trauma-informed supports.
- **Provide targeted relief to non-profit organizations**. Many non-profit organizations, including many mid-sized and larger organizations, have not fully benefited from the Paycheck Protection Program and other assistance programs. Without broader support for non-profit organizations, many organizations that provide crucial services, including mental and behavioral health supports, will be forced to reduce staffing or close altogether.
- **Protect Americans from evictions and provide rental assistance**. In addition to an infusion of \$25 billion in rental assistance for low- and moderate-income households who are struggling to

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. Week 22 Household Pulse Survey: January 6-18. Available at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2021/demo/hhp/hhp22.html>

pay their rent, consider extending the federal eviction moratorium through the end of the fiscal year.

- **Create and fund a \$25 billion emergency fund to help childcare providers** – including family childcare homes – pay for rent, utilities, payroll, and increased costs associated with the pandemic, such as items like personal protective equipment.
- **Expand the Child Tax Credit** to \$3,000 per child (\$3,600 for a child under the age of 6) and remove the \$2,500 earnings floor. This measure would be a step in the right direction on efforts to address inequality and ostensibly lift 9.9 million children above or closer to the poverty line, including 2.3 million Black children, 4.1 million Latino children, and 441,000 Asian American children.<sup>6</sup>
- **Extend relief and recovery support for minority-owned businesses.** Congress can extend grants/loans to minority-owned business or businesses in federal designated Opportunity Zones. The Treasury Department could issue guidance to lenders on how to support minority-owned businesses.
- **Increase Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds.** COVID-19 and the economic recession have led to increased TANF caseloads, generated higher costs for many TANF recipients – from higher utility costs to the need for internet access for remote schooling – and longer periods of joblessness given high unemployment.

## **Conclusion**

While COVID-19 has laid bare existing inequity in the U.S., the recovery period is an opportunity to not only stabilize American families and the economy, but also serve as a pathway toward a more equitable recovery in the short and longer term. The Biden-Harris Administration and Congress have the opportunity to immediately act on the recovery package and fully fund the key ingredients of the recovery plan and signal that these actions are a down payment in terms of additional efforts to surmount COVID-19 and reinvigorate the health and wellbeing of the communities we serve.

## **Additional COVID-19-related CCR Resources:**

[Community Implementation of Federal COVID-19 Response: Results and Recommendations](#)

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<sup>6</sup> Chuck Marr. Biden-Harris Child Tax Credit Expansion Would Lift 10 Million Children Above or Closer to Poverty Line. January 21, 2021. Available at <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/biden-harris-child-tax-credit-expansion-would-lift-10-million-children-above-or-closer-to>