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COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
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COURTS, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND
THE INTERNET

ASSISTANT TO THE MAJORITY WHIP

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1802

March 10, 2020

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Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, DC. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to urge you to provide cash assistance to individuals forced to remain home due to the COVID-19 virus. As you know, many Americans will need to stay home to either prevent themselves from spreading the COVID-19 virus to the larger community or to care for their family members. Additionally, businesses, schools and public agencies have already begun closing and limiting their hours of operation.

While the hardship experienced by salaried workers will be devastating, the pain felt by hourly and contract employees will be catastrophic. This dynamic is particularly pronounced in cities like New Orleans where the economy is heavily dependent on tourism and the service industry. The hardworking people that keep these economies afloat get paid through hourly or tipped wages and cannot afford to miss a paycheck. Yet that is exactly what they will face if this virus continues to spread.

Unfortunately, my district has a great deal of experience with natural and man-made disasters. With that experience, we have also learned a lot of lessons about what works best in response and recovery. The most effective form of relief currently at our disposal is direct cash payments to those negatively impacted by the spread of the virus. There is already a program in operation that could be used to do this: FEMA's Individual Assistance program. While it needs to be expanded to truly meet the needs of this situation, a similar direct cash assistance program should not be difficult to implement. By providing monetary relief as quickly as possible, we can effectively help hardworking Americans pay their bills and put food on the table for their families.

We cannot stop there if we are serious about taking this challenge head on. Any economic response to this virus must include support for both businesses and workers--especially those in the gig economy. It should also include a paid family leave proposal for those who must temporarily leave the workplace as a result of the virus. Like other serious illnesses, workers will need to either care for themselves or a loved one at home and should

not have to go broke doing so. Taking this critical step will ensure that Americans are not forced to decide between our public health and paying their own bills. Additionally, recovering from the effects of cancelled public events and recommended quarantines will require substantial resources and any targeted relief would certainly be encouraged.

I stand ready to help the people of this country and my district respond to and recover from the threat posed by the COVID-19 virus. Every day that goes by without a comprehensive relief strategy for workers and industries like those in my district is a missed opportunity to get things right. I look forward to hearing the Administration's plans for providing individual assistance to those affected and trust that these programs will be structured to provide direct cash payments and paid family leave to those in need.

Sincerely,



Cedric L. Richmond
Member of Congress