July 29, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
 Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We are pastoral leaders, daughters, sons, fathers, mothers, grandparents, brothers, and sisters. COVID-19 continues to affect every area of our lives and our communities from health care to schools to religious worship. As COVID-19 disrupts our common life, families will, ultimately, bear crucial responsibilities - caring for those who are sick, attending to children and loved ones when schools and other places of care close. All families, therefore, need a solid base of support.

In March, Congress enacted an emergency paid sick and family leave program as part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), enabling paid time off for COVID-related illness or care. Many households, however, fall through gaps in the law’s coverage and application. We urge Congress to close these gaps, enable all families to care, and protect public health during COVID-19.

**Guarantee emergency paid leave for COVID-19 related quarantine, illness, and caregiving, and for those who are pregnant and welcoming new children during COVID.** This includes:

- Care for a family member after exposure or infection by COVID-19.
- Care for oneself after exposure or infection by COVID-19.
- Care for a child whose school or place of care is closed or who is participating in distance learning due to COVID-19.
- Care for a disabled or elder family member at risk of COVID-19 in their place of care or whose place of care is unavailable.
- Bereavement for a family member who has died.
- Care for oneself and one’s child during the prenatal period, postnatal period, foster care, or adoption.

Family leave should support a range of family caregivers, similar to emergency paid sick days, including: parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, and other close relatives.

**Extend emergency paid leave to all workers, regardless of employer size.** The FFCRA excluded individuals who work for employers with more than 500 workers from its emergency leave mandate and created gaps for essential health care workers and employees of small employers. These exclusions should be remedied. The employees of large organizations and essential organizations are just as likely to need leave as other workers and denying paid leave
undermines public health. Among those still without paid leave are many women and workers of color. As households around the country look to paid leave to deal with school closures and distance learning, excluding workers from emergency paid leave could widen existing educational achievement gaps and further the spread of the virus.

**Extend emergency paid leave past December 2020.** The FFCRA is currently set to expire at the end of 2020, too early to accommodate COVID-19’s ongoing effects on health and family.

Because of COVID-19, families must make hard choices in the face of uncertainty. Paid family leave protects family caregivers from economic hardship while sustaining their connection to employment. Universal paid sick leave is a public health necessity. We encourage you to strengthen and extend emergency paid leave during this crucial time.

Sincerely,

Reverend Aundreia Alexander  
Associate General Secretary for Action and Advocacy, National Council of Churches USA

Hannah Anderson  
Author

Rachel Anderson  
Resident Fellow, Center for Public Justice

Nicole Baart  
Author

Katelyn Beaty  
Author, Speaker

Reverend Dr. Leslie Copeland-Tune  
Chief Operating Officer, National Council of Churches

Denise Daniels  
Hudson T. Harrison Chair of Entrepreneurship, Wheaton College

Elizabeth Denlinger Reaves  
Senior Program Director, Sojourners

Kathryn Freeman  
Attorney, Co-Host of Melanated Faith Podcast

Reverend Dr. Cassandra Gould  
Executive Director, Missouri Faith Voices

Marlena Graves  
Author

Reverend Ebony Grisom  
The Society for Faith and Justice

Reverend Sekinah Hamlin  
Minister of Economic Justice, United Church of Christ

Lisa Sharon Harper  
President, Freedom Road

Reverend Suzii Paynter March  
Executive Director, Prosper Waco

Dr. Nicole Martin  
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Courtney Reissig  
Author

Reverend Rachel Gunter Shapard  
Regional Vice President, Together for Hope Black Belt

Cessilye R. Smith  
Executive Director, Abide Women’s Health Services

Anne Snyder  
Editor-in-Chief, Comment

Stephanie Summers  
CEO, Center for Public Justice

Nikki Toyama-Szeto  
Executive Director, Evangelicals for Social Action

Sandi Villarreal  
Executive Editor, Sojourners

Michelle Ferrigno Warren  
Advocacy & Strategic Engagement Director, CCDA

Reverend Amy Ziettlow  
Pastor, Author
Walter Kim  
President, National Association of Evangelicals

Dr. Christina Edmondson  
Edmondson Consulting

Jeff Haanen  
CEO & Founder, Denver Institute for Faith & Work

Abby M. Foreman  
Professor of Social Work & Public Administration, Dordt University

Amber Lapp  
Research Fellow, Institute for Family Studies

Matthew Kaemingk  
Fuller Theological Seminary

Pastor Suzan Brown  
Senior Pastor, New Breed Church, Grand Rapids, MI

Stephanie Clark  
CEO, Amarah Inc, Woburn, MA

Randal S. Franz  
Professor of Management, Seattle Pacific University

Michelle Kirtley  
Fellow, Center for Public Justice

Steven McMullen  
Associate Professor of Economics, Hope College, Holland, MI

Marcus Mescher  
Associate Professor of Christian Ethics, Xavier University, Cincinnati, OH

Jacqui Jackson  
CEO, Ignite HOPE, Marietta, GA

Marilyn Rhames  
Teachers Who Pray

Chelsea Langston Bombino  
Director, Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance, Center for Public Justice

Justin Giboney  
President, AND Campaign

Steve Wells  
Pastor, South Main Baptist Church, Houston, TX

Melissa Wear  
Principal Consultant, Public Square Strategies

Michael Wear  
Chief Strategist, AND Campaign

Joanna Meyer  
Director, Denver Institute for Faith & Work

Reverend Jason Coker  
Together for Hope, Clinton, MS

Reverend Karen Hernandez  
Oregon-Idaho Conference, The United Methodist Church

Jeffrey W. Bailey  
Trustee, Center for Public Justice

Vilma “Nina” Balmaceda  
Peace and Hope International

John Bass  
Vice President for University Advancement, Dordt University

David Larsen  
Unity Christian Academy

Tom and Janice McWherter  
Chief Development Officer, World Renew, retired

Ted Williams  
City Colleges of Chicago

Jerry S. Herbert  
Trustee, Association for Public Justice

Katie Thompson  
Program Director, Center for Public Justice

Titles and institutions indicated for identification purposes