

# INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

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July 24, 2020

## VIA US Mail and Electronic Transmission

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the 1.4 million Teamsters and their families, I thank you for your leadership on legislation enacted to date which has provided critical supports to American families as they navigate the extraordinary impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. But this crisis is nowhere near over. I urge you to come together once again and swiftly pass another comprehensive, bipartisan bill which places working families and their ongoing needs at the center of the federal government's response.

As I wrote in my letter to you dated July 20, the shutdown of the U.S. economy has greatly amplified the financial struggle of multiemployer pension plans. The House passed *HEROES Act* (H.R. 6800) included the *Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act* which requires the federal government to set up a special partition program at the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation (PBGC) to rescue financially troubled multiemployer pension plans without cuts to retiree benefits. We urge you to include that proposal in the Senate's negotiated stimulus package.

Hundreds of millions of people across the nation are still being urged to stay home or reduce contact with others, but millions of Teamster essential workers are still out there “keeping America moving.” These brave men and women must be protected with enforceable OSHA safety standards and whistleblower protections. They must also be appropriately compensated for their sacrifice with hazard pay. The Teamsters Union supports inclusion of the *Every Worker Protection Act* (S. 3677) in the Senate side bill. Workers and workspaces not covered by OSHA, must also be similarly protected with enforceable standards from appropriate federal agencies, like the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Access to appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) remains a serious concern for many essential workers. It is critical for the Senate side bill to mandate the use of Defense Production Act (DPA) authorities to increase production and supply of critical medical supplies and PPE.

The *HEROES Act* imposes a mask-wearing requirement for passengers on Amtrak and major public transit agencies and requires Amtrak to provide employees with masks, gloves and hand sanitizer. Trains, stations and facilities owned or used by Amtrak have to be cleaned in accordance with CDC guidelines and Amtrak must develop guidelines for notifying employees if another employee tests positive. The House bill imposes similar requirements for air carriers and requires the Department of Transportation (DOT), in coordination with other appropriate federal agencies and labor unions, to develop a national aviation preparedness plan for communicable disease outbreaks. These are commonsense safety requirements that will protect Teamster members and the public. They should be included in the Senate bill.

Over 200,000 Teamsters work in the public sector. At this point we know that many states and localities will call for massive furloughs and layoffs if they are not provided with a significant amount of additional, flexible federal funding. This loss of income will not only devastate Teamster families, it will worsen the recession, delay recovery, and undercut public health response efforts. H.R. 6800 provides nearly \$1 trillion in supports for states, cities and towns and we urge you to include the same.

With many school districts, colleges and universities contemplating how and when to safely return to in-person learning, considerable funding is needed to address the added

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expense associated with necessary safety measures and distance learning for students and school employees. The debate over in-person learning has also exposed dramatic shortcomings in access to safe and affordable child care and our reliance on schools to provide an array of social services to at-risk student populations. We support inclusion of the *Coronavirus Child Care and Education Relief Act (CCCERA)*, which provides \$430 billion for K-12, higher education, social service, school transportation and child care needs in the Senate stimulus bill. It is critical that the final negotiated stimulus package expressly ensure that these funds are also made available to protect the employment of school bus drivers and other school contractors throughout this crisis.

The *CARES Act (H.R. 748)* allocated \$32 billion in payroll grants to commercial airlines and airline contractors exclusively “for the continuation of employee wages, salaries, and benefits.” By preventing airline recipients from any layoffs or involuntary furloughs until September 30, 2020, the program kept hundreds of thousands of airline workers employed and with health benefits during the pandemic. Air travel remains a slight fraction of last year’s levels and demand will remain depressed well into next year. Should October arrive without extending the Airline Payroll Support Program (PSP), mass layoffs are inevitable. We urge you to extend the PSP through March 31, 2021.

Millions of Americans remain out of work and over a million new claims for unemployment benefits are still being filed from week to week. Now is not the time to pull back on the expansion of unemployment insurance benefits provided by the *CARES Act*. We urge you to extend the \$600 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) supplement and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits through January 31, 2021. These benefits are critical, but only part of what is needed to financially sustain American households through this crisis. This legislative package must go further with another round of targeted stimulus for individual households, and by temporarily banning foreclosures, evictions, and aggressive collection practices by debt collectors. It is also important that the Senate bill include language to overturn the unfair sequestration of *Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA)* benefits.

*The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (H.R. 6201)* provided a federal paid leave mandate for the first time. However, overly broad exemptions and limitations on that

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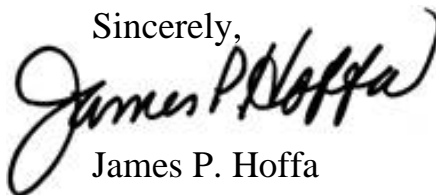
mandate overlooked a large swath of Teamster employers and members. We urge you to repeal those exemptions for large employers, emergency responders, and health care employers.

Displaced workers need immediate, reliable and continued access to comprehensive health insurance. The *HEROES Act* provides eleven months of emergency federal subsidies at 100% to cover the COBRA health insurance payments of unemployed workers. The bill also increases federal Medicaid funding to 14 percent to ensure states can handle rising Medicaid caseloads without diverting resources from other critical services. We urge you to include the *Worker Health Coverage Protection Act* (H.R. 6514) in the final negotiated stimulus package.

To contain this crisis and move toward a truly safe reopening of the economy, we must invest in significant, state level testing and tracing capacity. The *HEROES Act* calls for \$75 billion in funding for testing and tracing. We encourage you to include the same in the Senate side stimulus bill.

Since the beginning of this crisis, working people have been calling on their elected officials to take bold action that ensures health, safety and economic security for all. Legislation enacted so far has gone a long way toward answering this call. With this bill, we must finish the job. There's no time to waste and no space for error. I implore you to once again approach these legislative negotiations with kindness, empathy and equity as your guiding principles.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James P. Hoffa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James P. Hoffa  
General President

JPH/sm

cc: United States Senate