American Public Human Services Association

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Families First Coronavirus Response Act (HR 6201)

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On March 12, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act was introduced in the House to provide additional funding and authority to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and support households facing economic hardship as a result of the virus. On March 18, after multiple revisions, the Senate passed the bill. The legislative proposal includes proposed policies and appropriations that would aide state and local human service agency response to emerging needs in their communities.

NUTRITION SUPPORTS

1. **SNAP Benefits -** The bill provides added flexibility and funding to use SNAP benefits to meet emerging needs in the community.

   - *SNAP Benefits Due to School Closures* – Provides Congressional authority for states to issue temporary SNAP benefits to households with children eligible for free or reduced school meals, for both SNAP and non-SNAP recipients, if schools are closed for at least five consecutive days. The Secretary of Agriculture may authorize State educational agencies and school food authorities to release appropriate information for this to be carried out. The benefits will be not less than the value of meals at the free rate. Affected areas must have a public health emergency declaration and an approved State agency plan for issuing the benefits.

   - *Waives SNAP Work Requirements* – Temporarily waives work requirements in areas with a public health emergency designation; states may still require individuals comply with requirements of programs offered by the State agency. Disregards months during the public health emergency from being counted towards work requirements for ABAWDs.

   - *Adds Flexibility in SNAP Administration* – Provides flexibility for states to issue emergency allotments to SNAP recipients to address temporary food needs not greater than the maximum monthly allotment and to adjust benefit issuance methods based on circumstances on the ground.

2. **Additional Nutrition Programs -** The bill provides additional funding for nutritional supports and codifies strategies to serve children and seniors in non-congregate settings.

   - *Emergency Funding for WIC and Commodity Assistance Program* – Appropriates $500 million to the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and $400 million to the Commodity Assistance Program.

- *Meal Service with Appropriate Safety Measures* – Builds off recent USDA guidance to permit child and adult care centers to seek alternatives to traditional congregate settings and other safety measures deemed appropriate in regard to COVID-19 for providing meals to individuals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and authorizes USDA to waive nutritional content requirements if necessary to provide meals due to a supply chain disruption.
- *Allowable Increase in Federal Costs for School Lunch* – The Secretary may grant waiver requests to the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act that increases Federal costs.
- *Funds Aging and Disability Service Programs* – Appropriates $250 million for home-delivered nutrition services ($160 million), congregate nutrition services ($80 million), and nutrition services for Native Americans ($10 million).

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

1. **Enhanced Medicaid FMAP –** Allows for a temporary increase in the Federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) to be increased by 6.2 percentage points for each state for each quarter during a COVID-19-related public health emergency.

2. **Diagnostic Testing –** Ensures that all testing of COVID-19 be free to those being tested, whether they be covered by private or public health insurance, or do not have health insurance. Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP would be tested under no cost-share, but it the state plan includes cost-share, they must submit a State Plan Amendment to change this. The bill requires the National Disaster Medical System to reimburse laboratories for testing in those without health coverage. The bill does not address any treatment costs.

LABOR

1. **Paid Sick Leave –** After the first 10 days of leave that an employee takes unpaid, they will be paid for each subsequent day that is equal to at least two-thirds of what they would have made otherwise (not to exceed $200/day or $10,000 total). This does not apply to businesses with 25 employees or less.

2. **Emergency Leave –** If an employee is being quarantined related to COVID-19 or has been advised to self-quarantine, is experiencing symptoms, is caring for someone with symptoms, is caring for their children due to school closures, or has another similar condition, their employee shall provide paid sick time if they are unable to telework unless the employee is a health care provider or emergency responder.

3. **Extended Unemployment Compensation –** In states when unemployment compensation claims have increased by at least 10% over the same quarter, the bill provides 100% federal funding for Extended Benefits, which normally requires 50% funding to come from states.