



Summary of Federal Legislation Passed in Response to COVID-19

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This *issue brief* provides a summary of the federal legislation that has passed in response to the COVID-19, or coronavirus, public health emergency.

H.R. 6074: Emergency Funding

The Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2020 was signed into law on March 6, 2020. The bill provided emergency funding for the following federal agencies to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus outbreak.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) was appropriated \$6.5 billion for use by the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and for the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund. This money was to be used for a variety of purposes, including: grants for states and local health service providers to carry out preparedness and response activities; funding to advance medical countermeasures, vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics; support for the production of medical supplies and medical surge capacity; and worker-based training to prevent and reduce exposure of hospital employees, emergency first responders, and other workers who are at risk of exposure to COVID-19.

The State Department was appropriated \$1.3 billion to be used for a variety of purposes related to international needs associated with the coronavirus

pandemic, including maintaining consular operations; reimbursement of evacuation expenses; support of global health programs overseen by the U.S. Agency for International Development; and other international support.

Finally, the Small Business Administration was appropriated \$20 million for the Disaster Loans Program, which provides low-interest loans to help businesses, renters, and homeowners recover from the economic impact of declared disasters.

The bill expanded coverage of telehealth services by Medicare. Read more about these services [here](#).

H.R. 6201: Families First

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act was signed into law on March 18, 2020. The bill expanded and increased funding for services designed to assist individuals and families negatively impacted by the COVID-19 emergency.

Food assistance. The bill provided \$1.25 billion in supplemental funding to programs aimed at providing food assistance to individuals in need during the COVID-19 public health emergency, including the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Emergency Food Assistance Program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Administration for Community Living for the elderly, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the National School Lunch Program. This included funding to ensure low-income

students received meals and snacks while schools were closed due to the pandemic.

COVID-19 testing and services. The bill included an appropriation of \$1.2 billion for COVID-19 testing and services for a variety of populations, including uninsured individuals. The bill also required private health insurance companies to cover COVID-19 testing without imposing any cost-sharing.

Paid leave. The bill expanded the U.S. Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 to allow certain employees to take leave to care for their child while school or childcare was closed due to COVID-19. Leave taken in excess of ten days was required to be paid. The bill also required employers to provide up to two weeks of paid sick leave for any employees unable to work due to circumstances related to COVID-19. The law applied to employers with 500 or fewer employees, though those with 50 or fewer employees may qualify for an exemption. Employers were eligible for certain tax credits based on leave wages paid. These provisions were in effect through December 31, 2020.

Unemployment support. The bill provided \$1 billion in grants to assist states in responding to the increased demands for unemployment insurance benefits.

Additional resources. Additional information about this bill can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

H.R. 748: CARES Act

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law on March 27, 2020. The bill made a variety of changes to support different areas of the U.S. economy impacted by the COVID-19 emergency and provide supports to the health care system.

Individual assistance. The bill provided a variety of supports to individuals negatively impacted by the COVID-19 emergency. The bill provided payments

of up to \$1,200 per person, plus \$500 per child, which were phased out above certain income levels. The bill also expanded federally funded unemployment benefits to allow additional individuals impacted by COVID-19 to receive benefits, provided an additional \$600 per week in benefits, and allowed for an additional 13 weeks of benefits. Changes to the taxation on retirement plan withdrawals, payments on federally backed mortgage loans, and federal student loan deferrals were also made to provide additional assistance.

Business assistance. The bill created a \$500 billion fund from which the Treasury Department was able to provide loans, loan guarantees, and other investments to eligible businesses, states, and municipalities that have incurred losses as a result of coronavirus. The bill also made a variety of tax policy changes to provide assistance to businesses of all sizes that were negatively impacted by the pandemic.

The bill included appropriations of more than \$370 billion to the Small Business Administration for various support programs to help small businesses cover ongoing operating expenses, including employee paychecks, and remain operational through the public health emergency. More information about the resources available for small businesses can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Health care system supports. A significant portion of the bill was dedicated to increasing supports for the health care system. This included methods to increase the supply of critical medical supplies, \$1.32 billion to be used for grants to health centers that service medically underserved populations, and increased supports for telehealth and rural health services.

Direct payments to states. The bill created a \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund for states, tribes, and local governments in proportion to population. These funds were intended to cover unanticipated expenditures incurred due to the COVID-19 emergency.

Other appropriations. Finally, the bill provided additional funding to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the COVID-19 emergency. Some of the larger appropriations included an additional \$127 billion for the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund, \$45 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Relief Fund, \$31 billion for the Education Stabilization Fund, and an additional \$24.6 billion for SNAP and child nutrition programs.

Additional resources. Additional information about this bill can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

H.R. 266: Additional Relief Funding

The Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act was signed into law on April 24, 2020. The bill provided additional funding for small business assistance programs and COVID-19 testing.

Small business assistance. The bill allocated an additional \$310 billion in funding for loans through the Paycheck Protection Program, which was originally created in the CARES Act and is administered by the Small Business Administration. The bill required that a certain portion of these loans be made by smaller financial institutions. The bill also allocated an additional \$20 billion in funding for Economic Injury Disaster Loans and Emergency Grants and made agricultural enterprises with no more than 500 employees eligible for this program. The bill appropriated an additional \$50 billion to the Disaster Loans Program.

Health care and COVID-19 testing funding. The bill appropriated an additional \$75 billion to the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund to reimburse eligible health care providers for health care-related expenses or lost revenues that are attributable to coronavirus. The bill also appropriated an additional \$25 billion to the same fund to be used to research, develop, validate, manufacture, purchase, administer, and expand capacity for COVID-19 testing. Of that amount,

\$11 billion was designated for states, tribes, and localities.

H.R. 133: 2021 Federal Appropriations

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 was signed into law on December 27, 2020. The bill provided for general federal government appropriations through September 2021, and included \$900 billion in various forms of COVID-19 pandemic relief, as outlined below.

Stimulus payments. The bill provided payments of up to \$600 per person, plus \$600 per child. The stimulus payments were phased out above certain income levels.

Unemployment benefits. The bill extended the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program, which was created in the CARES Act, to provide 11 additional weeks, up to 50 total weeks, of unemployment benefits. The bill also recreated the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation Program, which was also created in the CARES Act and ended in July, to provide an additional \$300 per week in federally funded unemployment benefits through March 14, 2021. The bill also added new identity verification and reporting requirements for state unemployment programs.

Small business assistance. The bill modified and expanded the Paycheck Protection Program and made \$284 billion available for new, forgivable loans under the program. The bill appropriated an additional \$41 billion to other small business assistance programs, including \$15 billion in grants under the newly-created Shuttered Venue Operators program for operators of various types of live venues, museums, and movie theaters who experienced at least a 25 percent reduction in revenues because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The bill established a \$9 billion program to support the efforts of low- and moderate-income community financial institutions to provide loans, grants, forbearance, and other supports to small businesses,

minority-owned businesses, and consumers in low-income and underserved communities. The bill appropriated an additional \$3 billion to community development financial institutions that support economically-disadvantaged communities.

COVID-19 vaccine, testing, and research. The bill appropriated \$32 billion for the development, purchase, and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and other medical supplies and capacity. An additional \$22 billion was appropriated for testing, contact tracing, and other COVID-19 monitoring and suppression efforts. Additionally, the bill appropriated \$1.25 billion to the National Institutes of Health for research and clinical trials related to long-term studies of COVID-19.

Health care. The bill appropriated \$4.25 billion for substance abuse, suicide prevention, and other behavioral health programs. An additional \$3 billion was allocated to reimburse health care providers for COVID-related expenses and lost revenue.

Education and child care. The bill appropriated \$82 billion to various education funds and educational institutions. This funding was intended to support elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education. The bill also appropriated \$10 billion to support child care providers.

Transportation funding. The bill provided \$16 billion in support for airline workers and \$2 billion in grants for airports. The bill also appropriated \$14 billion for transit infrastructure grants, \$10 billion for highway infrastructure programs, and \$2 billion in grants for transportation service providers.

Rental assistance. The bill provided states and local governments with \$25 billion for rental and utility payment assistance and other housing stability services. The bill also extended the CDC eviction moratorium, which was initially in place from September 4 through December 31, 2020, through January 31, 2021.

Agricultural programs. The bill provided \$11.2 billion in support for agricultural producers, growers, and processors that were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Of this amount, \$1.5 billion was required to be used to purchase and distribute food and agricultural products to individuals in need and for grants and loans to help small and mid-sized agricultural entities respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including to help pay for worker protection measures. The bill appropriated \$860 million to other support programs in the agriculture industry and \$700 million for various food assistance programs.

Additional provisions. The bill made several additional changes and appropriations to other programs, such as the U.S. Postal Service, broadband service, and disaster relief. The bill also extended employers' eligibility for tax credits on any qualifying leave wages that were voluntarily paid through March 31, 2021, though the requirement that employers provide paid leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act ended on December 31, 2020.

Additional resources. Additional information about this bill can be found [here](#).

H.R. 1319: The American Rescue Plan

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 was signed into law on March 11, 2021. The bill provided funding for a wide range of programs to support the country's economic recovery from the COVID-19 public health emergency.

State and local funding. The bill appropriated almost \$220 billion to the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to help states recover from the fiscal effects of the COVID-19 emergency. States must use these funds to cover costs that are incurred by December 31, 2024. An additional \$10 billion was provided to states for capital projects. The bill also appropriated \$130.2 billion to the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund to help cities and counties

recover from the fiscal effects of the COVID-19 emergency.

Education and child care. The bill appropriated an additional \$123 billion to the Education Stabilization Fund to assist schools with the return to in-person instruction and to address learning loss. The bill also appropriated \$40 billion for institutions of higher education and more than \$40 billion for various child care grant programs.

Public health care. The bill appropriated more than \$14 billion for COVID-19 vaccine research, manufacturing, distribution, administration, and tracking efforts. An additional \$10 billion was appropriated under the Defense Production Act for COVID-19 testing, vaccines, and personal protective equipment. The bill also appropriated more than \$70 billion for a variety of other public health programs, more than \$3 billion for mental health grants and programs, and \$8.7 billion for global public health efforts.

Small business assistance. The bill appropriated \$33.5 billion to small business assistance programs, including \$7.25 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program, \$15 billion for the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program, and \$1.25 billion for the Shuttered Venue Operators program. The bill also created and appropriated \$28.6 billion for a new Restaurant Revitalization Fund to provide grants to restaurants to aid in their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Housing assistance. The bill appropriated \$46 billion for a variety of housing assistance programs, including \$21.6 billion for emergency rental assistance, \$10 billion for the Homeowner Assistance Fund, and \$4.5 billion for Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act programs.

Transportation funding. The bill appropriated \$30.5 billion for grants for public transportation entities and \$26 billion in assistance for airline employee protection measures, assistance for airports, and support for aviation manufacturing jobs.

Relief for individuals and families. The bill provided stimulus payments of up to \$1,400 per person, plus \$1,400 per child. The payments were phased out above certain income levels. The bill appropriated more than \$3 billion for SNAP and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs. The bill also increased the amount of the child tax credit for 2021 to \$3,000, or \$3,600 for children under the age of six, and made 17-year-olds eligible for the credit. Additionally, the bill expanded the individuals who qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit and increased the child and dependent care tax credit.

Additional provisions. The bill included many additional provisions, such as: an appropriation of \$50 billion to FEMA, which the agency may use to pay for funeral expenses for individuals who have died of COVID-19; the extension of several federal unemployment insurance programs through September 6, 2021; an appropriation of \$2 billion for unemployment insurance fraud detection and prevention activities; and an appropriation of \$4 billion for the Department of Agriculture to support the food supply chain and agriculture pandemic response and \$1 billion to provide support for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

Additional resources. Additional information about this bill can be found [here](#) and [here](#).