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

As Congress responds to the critical needs of our country during the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to ensure that the vital protections and economic lifelines provided in coronavirus relief legislation are accessible to all communities, regardless of immigration status or limited English proficiency. COVID-19 has caused one of the greatest public health and economic crises our Nation has ever faced, and it requires a whole-of-society approach. A response that leaves out immigrants—many of whom are on the front lines in our fight against COVID-19—will be ineffective and detrimental to our efforts to stop this pandemic.

As the COVID-19 outbreak is challenging our already-strained medical system, we must keep in mind that immigrants make up a disproportionate share of nurses, home health aides, and health care facility workers. Nearly 1.7 million immigrants work in the health care industry. There are 29,000 DACA recipients who are health care workers, while another 12,700 DACA recipients support the health care industry in crucial roles such as custodians and administrators. In addition, there are 11,600 Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders who are health care workers. Therefore, it is vital that Congress ensures that immigrant workers, including these frontline workers who are risking their lives to save others, are able to maintain their work authorization and access key coronavirus relief measures.

Moreover, during a time when more than ninety percent of Americans, as of April 8, have been ordered to stay at home except to get essential services, we are relying on farmworkers, grocery store workers, and other essential service providers to meet our basic needs. Many of these indispensable workers are immigrants who face additional vulnerabilities such as low incomes and lack of health insurance coverage. As these workers endure the challenges of this pandemic to provide for our critical needs, we request that you extend the coronavirus cash assistance Congress provided in the CARES Act to include immigrant families who file taxes with an Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN). In 2015 alone, 4.35 million people paid more than $13.7 billion in net taxes using an ITIN, according to the American Immigration Council. By
excluding ITIN filers and their family members from access to cash payments, spouses and children in mixed-status immigrant families will be denied critical economic support, including 5.1 million children, the vast majority of whom are U.S. citizens.

As Congress is taking bold steps to provide coverage of COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccines, it must ensure that everyone has adequate access to these health care services, regardless of immigration status. Congress expanded COVID-19 testing through Medicaid for the uninsured in prior coronavirus relief legislation. We ask for additional clarity to ensure that all uninsured individuals, including immigrants, may qualify. We also ask that in any subsequent coronavirus relief legislation, you ensure that all low-income communities, including immigrants, can access Medicaid-funded COVID-19-related medical care such as treatment and vaccines, alongside coverage for testing.

We further request that you modify immigration policies that deter immigrant families from obtaining the medical care they need during this public health emergency, such as the public charge rule and immigration enforcement actions around sensitive locations. Despite U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services’ announcement that those obtaining COVID-19 testing or treatment will not be penalized under the public charge rule, the rule continues to have a widespread chilling effect. It has discouraged even those not subject to the rule, including U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents, from getting the health care and essential services they need due to fear and confusion about the rule’s impact. Suspending the public charge rule and immigration enforcement actions around sensitive locations, such as hospitals, COVID-19 testing sites, domestic violence shelters, food banks, and sites providing food and nutrition services for women, infants, and children, would help ensure that vulnerable populations are able to access critical coronavirus services.

Accordingly, we strongly urge you to build on the critical steps Congress has taken to protect families and workers in prior coronavirus relief packages by including the above-mentioned common sense measures in the upcoming relief legislation. We also ask that you provide robust funding for government agencies and community based-organizations to provide information about these coronavirus services in at least the languages described as most encountered in the 2016 FEMA Language Access Plan. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Judy Chu
United States Representative

/s/ Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey
United States Senator
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/s/ Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator

/s/ Patty Murray  
United States Senator

/s/ J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress

/s/ Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

/s/ James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

/s/ Grace Napolitano  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress

/s/ Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

/s/ Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

/s/ Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

/s/ Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress

/s/ Ilhan Omar  
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Member of Congress

/s/ Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

/s/ Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

/s/ Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

/s/ Frederica Wilson  
Member of Congress

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/s/ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
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/s/ Pramila Jayapal  
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Member of Congress

/s/ Sylvia R. Garcia
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/s/ Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

/s/ Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

/s/ Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

/s/ Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

/s/ Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

/s/ Jason Crow
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/s/ Bill Foster
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/s/ Mark Pocan
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/s/ Mark Takano
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/s/ Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
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/s/ Donald S. Beyer Jr.
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/s/ Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

/s/ Albio Sires
Member of Congress