



Representative Suzanne Bonamici
2231 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

May 15, 2020

Dear Representative Bonamici:

The Executive Board of the Washington County Democrats is writing on behalf of the party to express interest in the potential content and details of the next round of stimulus that is being developed. Our members all have specific concerns and different perspectives, but of course we do not have the whole picture. For that reason we have listed some serious concerns raised by members of our Resolutions and Platform Committee.

As we are sure you are aware, because of the pandemic, our Central Committee is not meeting and so we cannot present a formal resolution. We trust you will take these concerns into consideration when passing this needed legislation. The concerns presented are not in a specific priority order and we trust you to consider them in the proper context.

1. Vote By Mail - We are very supportive of all efforts to expand Oregon's Vote By Mail since it has proven secure, convenient, and encourages voter turnout. It is also nearly pandemic proof. We strongly support efforts to provide incentives in the next COVID bill to make Vote By Mail a nationwide standard.

2. Unemployment - We are concerned that the flattened curve will extend the economic hardship in some business and employment sectors and we urge, when and where needed, extensions of the unemployment insurance provisions.

3. Direct Payments - We are quite sure that recovery will be variable and some sectors will experience extended employment hardship. It seems almost a given that a second round of direct payments will be necessary at a level at least equal to the first round. We support this concept.

4. Loopholes - Regarding these direct payments, we know some persons and families in Washington County who are falling through the cracks under the

current rules, and we strongly urge you to close loopholes that currently exclude some independent and multiple-job part time workers from this assistance.

5. Hospitals and Clinics – We understand that assistance to hospitals, to the tune of \$500 billion, was included in the America CARES Acts passed in April. We are concerned that a second round must ensure that sufficient funding will be directed toward rural health care providers and clinics in economically disadvantaged areas.

6. Affordable Care Act (ACA) Enrollment – We feel that the Administration is ethically wrong in not opening up the enrollment period for the ACA. This is particularly important for people who need care in states that did not choose to sign onto the ACA. This seems to be a punitive response toward people with great health care needs.

7. COVID and Antibody Testing – We have been appalled with the inconsistent verbiage and limited testing assistance as offered by the Trump Administration. We strongly support greater testing assistance, both for identification and resistance, so that problems with specific communities (e.g. low income, minority, veterans, and elderly) can be pinpointed and dealt with using concrete and reliable data. This is particularly important to reduce the potential for a resurgence. We also urge that any new legislation contain guarantees that all non-personal data be made public and widely accessible.

8. Utility/ Service Assistance – As you are aware, in many instances families that are affected by school closures will encounter higher basic utility costs (water, power, internet, sewage, garbage, etc.). We insist that provisions be included that will work to prevent such charges from throwing families into housing insecurity or homelessness.

9. Nutrition Restrictions – Recent actions by the Trump Administration to tighten criteria for assistance programs such as SNAP are both nefarious and deceptive, since their impact on federal budgets is minimal. A new bill should roll back all these restrictions so that people who need nutrition assistance can get it.

10. Schools – We urge you to consider special provisions to ensure that school districts have funds necessary to allow them to adjust to new distance learning requirements, which could return in the next year. This is specifically critical in lower income areas (e.g. inner-city schools and rural schools where students may not have the resources to acquire needed materials and technologies).

As Democrats, we are aware that these are difficult times and that people need assistance immediately, not in some distant future. We trust you will do your very best to make sure that the citizens, schools, and small businesses of Oregon (and the rest of the nation) receive the assistance they need to weather this viral storm.

For the Executive Board of the Washington County Democrats,

Patrick Maguire

Patrick Maguire
Chair, Washington County Democrats