



Connected **for Life**

February 16, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Minority Leader  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

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

On behalf of the 122 million Americans living with diabetes and pre-diabetes, thank you for your urgent work to address the nation's coronavirus pandemic. The diabetes community faces unprecedented and disproportionate risks from COVID-19. Their health is at a greater risk—according to a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study, nearly [40 percent](#) of Americans who die from COVID-19 had diabetes. And they are disproportionately affected financially—the unemployment rate among people with diabetes is [18 percent](#) during the pandemic, compared to 12 percent for all other Americans.

What's more, the coronavirus pandemic has laid bare dangerous disparities in the U.S. health care system—both low-income Americans and communities of color are more likely to have diabetes and experience severe outcomes from COVID-19 as a result. African Americans and Latino Americans are more than [50 percent](#) more likely to have diabetes than white Americans are. Additionally, according to the National Institutes of Health, diabetes prevalence is inversely related to household income level—the lowest-income communities in the U.S. experience the [highest rates](#) of diabetes.

As Congress continues work on its latest Covid-19 relief package, the American Diabetes Association urges you to support the following provisions as part of the final bill:

- **Premium assistance for COBRA continuation coverage through the rest of the fiscal year.** Americans with diabetes are experiencing a massive unemployment event, which has led to a dramatic loss of employer-sponsored health insurance coverage. COBRA is unaffordable for these individuals who no longer have a steady income, and allowing families to maintain their existing coverage with this financial support is essential for diabetes management and overall health during this pandemic.
- **Expanded premium assistance for individuals who purchase insurance plans through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) marketplace or are ineligible for COBRA.** People with diabetes are at risk of some of the most severe outcomes from COVID-19, and they need a health insurance plan that enables them to effectively manage their diabetes through sufficient coverage of insulin and other drugs, continuous glucose monitors, insulin pumps and supplies. This COVID-19 relief package should provide robust financial assistance to COBRA-ineligible individuals, families with



ACA marketplace plans and people who are getting insurance through the individual market while receiving unemployment benefits.

- **Funding for COVID-19 testing and vaccine distribution in medically underserved communities.** Many Americans with diabetes at a much higher risk for hospitalization and mortality from COVID-19 infection do not have access to a primary care physician, nor are they in a neighborhood with an accessible COVID-19 testing center, information about vaccine eligibility or transportation to a health care provider offering vaccines. This COVID-19 relief package should include more funding targeted to community health centers, academic medical centers and other nonprofit organizations to offer COVID-19 testing and distribute vaccines through important delivery mechanisms such as mobile testing and vaccination units, meeting high-risk Americans in their own neighborhoods.
- **Additional funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).** This relief package should include additional resources for administering SNAP during this public health emergency. Congress should also dedicate funding to improve important SNAP online purchasing programs, taking into consideration families who lack access to traditional ways to purchase food, such as in-person grocery shopping, during a pandemic.

As Congress continues to think through ways to provide relief to Americans who need it most during this public health emergency, we also look forward to continuing to work with you on other issues important to our community—namely drug affordability through policies such as caps on patient cost-sharing for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your efforts to address the health and financial consequences of this pandemic for Americans, especially Americans living with diabetes. I hope our organization can serve as a resource during these difficult times. We appreciate in advance your efforts to stand with us on behalf of Americans living with diabetes and pre-diabetes, who face extraordinary challenges and life-threatening vulnerabilities during this crisis.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tracey D. Brown'.

Tracey Brown  
Chief Executive Officer  
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Arlington, VA 22202