

## Diabetes Community Secures Major Benefits in COVID-19 Rescue Plan

### *What Just Happened?*

Today the House passed a nearly \$2 trillion COVID-19 relief package, the American Rescue Plan, passed by the Senate on Saturday. The bill will now be sent to President Biden's desk for signature.

This plan operationalizes President Biden's proposal to give Americans another round of pandemic relief checks, increase funding for vaccine production and distribution, extend pandemic unemployment benefits, and provide relief funds to state and local governments. Congress also added a more generous child tax credit, funding for K-12 and higher education, more tools to help small businesses retain employees during the pandemic and more dollars for health care providers. It is due to go into effect before pandemic unemployment benefits expire on March 14.

### *Why is this Important to People with Diabetes?*

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Diabetes Association® (ADA) has pressed Washington to make sure that people with diabetes who lose their job and their health insurance are still able to access affordable health care coverage. We have also urged the government to provide more COVID-19 testing and vaccines in medically underserved communities and advocated for a national response to the growing problem of food insecurity in the diabetes community.

Congress's response includes these three important benefits for people with diabetes:

1. **Continuity of affordable health insurance**: With unemployment among Americans with diabetes at about [18 percent](#)—much higher than the national average—millions of people with diabetes and their families have lost income, and many of them have lost their employer health insurance plan. The American Rescue Plan includes a 100-percent COBRA subsidy, allowing people who lose employer-based health insurance to keep that plan at no cost to them. The bill also provides new financial support to help with insurance premiums for people who need to buy a plan on the Affordable Care Act exchange, and it makes more individuals and families eligible for that financial assistance.
2. **COVID-19 testing and vaccines in underserved communities**: [Thirty-eight million](#) Americans live in poverty, and [76 percent](#) of them are people of color. The poorest communities in the country experience some of the highest [rates of diabetes](#). Americans with diabetes are [six times](#) more likely to be hospitalized and 12 times more likely to die of COVID-19 than others. The American Rescue Plan includes funding for lifeline community organizations and

public health departments to offer COVID-19 tests and vaccines in underserved communities, a critical benefit for communities where many residents do not have a primary care doctor, a hospital in their neighborhood or transportation to get to a testing or vaccine site.

3. **Improved access to affordable food**: More than [one in four](#) Americans with diabetes say the pandemic has disrupted their ability to get healthy food. The American Rescue Plan increases funding for federal food programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to make sure Americans with diabetes can afford the food they need to manage their diabetes. The bill also improves access to online purchasing programs, helping people with diabetes avoid coronavirus exposure by allowing them to get their groceries affordably from home.