August 3, 2020

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As the beginning of the school year approaches during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Trump administration, Congress, and our schools must address the safety and needs of parents, students, teachers, other school staff, and our communities. As public health professionals and organizations dedicated to protecting the public’s health, we know that access to comprehensive paid leave is critical to being able to safely return to in-person instruction. We write to urge the administration and Congress to ensure universal access to emergency paid sick leave and paid family and medical leave through 2021. That means eliminating private sector exemptions for emergency paid sick and family leave and expanding the reasons for emergency paid leave to include time to recover or care for someone recovering from COVID-19. Congress should also ensure public sector entities can access federal tax credits now and retroactively for emergency paid sick leave.

Cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. have surpassed four million, with surges in states across the country, particularly those with early reopening and lack of safety protocols. In communities that decide to provide some or all classes in-person, there is greater risk of spread of COVID-19 to children, families, school staff, and the broader community. And we know that these impacts will be experienced most acutely in communities of color that have already been hardest hit by the pandemic. Such disparities will only be amplified unless paid leave to care for one’s own health and the health of family members is available to everyone, regardless of where someone works and whether or not their employer provides the leave necessary to meet this public health emergency.

Meaningful paid leave that covers everyone is one of our strongest tools to stop the spread of COVID-19. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act which Congress passed in March guaranteed some paid sick leave for individuals impacted by COVID-19. Yet up to 106 million private-sector workers lack the emergency paid sick days that would ensure a safer reopening.

In its May “Considerations for Schools” document, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encouraged schools to “Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices that enable staff to stay home when they are sick, have been exposed, or caring for someone who is sick.” Broader CDC guidance for businesses and employers also encouraged policies that allow sick employees to stay home. The ability for schools and campuses to meet these CDC recommendations is only as good as the access staff actually have to paid leave.

Providing comprehensive, universal paid leave is critical to limiting community spread of COVID-19 by reducing the risk that children and adults will come into contact with people who have contracted the virus as schools, businesses, and public spaces reopen. Expanded paid sick
and family leave is necessary so that parents, children, and school staff — from teachers and clerical staff to bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and janitorial staff — can get tested, isolate or quarantine as necessary if sick, and safely recover. Paid leave or other reasonable accommodation is also necessary for the nearly 1.5 million teachers who are at risk of serious illness or death due to underlying health conditions, as well as those who have a high-risk individual in their household, and who may be advised by their medical providers to remain at home during a local outbreak. Likewise, it is critical that parents, including many employed in the private sector, are able to stay home as long as children are home because of remote learning or staggered in-person days — which has already surpassed the maximum amount of time provided in FFCRA. Emergency paid leave must also be available to all parents who are exposed to or ill from COVID-19, or to care for children who are ill. This is why universal access to emergency paid leave and expanded family leave is essential to any return to in-person learning.

As public health professionals, we know that paid sick days and paid leave will have a positive impact on our communities. Paid sick leave is proven to reduce transmission of infectious disease. An estimated additional 5 million people contracted the H1N1 virus during the 2009 pandemic because of a lack of policies such as paid sick leave. Data from the H1N1 outbreak also show that of the almost 26 million employees at the time who may have had the virus, 8 million did not take any time off, which in turn led to contagion among coworkers and extended the duration of the outbreak.

Numerous Health Impact Assessments have studied paid sick day policies in states across the country and found significant benefits in reducing transmission of disease, especially in child care and food service environments, which would both apply to schools:

- When employees are able to access paid sick days, there is a significant reduction in influenza infections
- Workers without paid sick leave are three times more likely to delay or forego needed care
- Paid sick day laws in seven major U.S. cities helped prevent about 100 influenza-like infections per week for every 100,000 people
- Population-level influenza-like disease rates decrease after employees gain access to paid sick leave.

These policies also prevent financial hardship for workers and families and reduce health care costs overall. Furthermore, paid leave programs ensure ongoing financial security, which is associated with a range of positive outcomes promoting family well-being and health:

- Parents who received full pay while taking leave to care for their children with special needs reported positive impacts to their child’s physical and emotional health, their own emotional health, and reported fewer financial problems
- Parents and other caregivers who take paid family leave experience greater financial stability, through continued employment, an increase in wages, and higher retirement savings
- Longitudinal studies on paid parental leave programs in Europe and some U.S. states reveal beneficial outcomes for maternal health, and child physical and mental health.
Paid leave would help ensure short- and long-term economic security of parents and educators who are unable to work while they recover from COVID-19 or provide care to loved ones. Without a stable source of income, families are at risk of food insecurity, housing instability, toxic stress, and poor health outcomes. Paid family leave could protect families from entering or deepening into poverty and avert a range of poor health outcomes. As noted, the social determinants of health that are already at play in our hardest hit communities will be greatly exacerbated without broad access to paid leave.

Quality education is one of the most important drivers of health outcomes over an individual’s lifetime. As public health professionals, we support policies and systemic supports that can enable schools and campuses to open safely and equitably. We are asking this administration to heed the advice of public health professionals, from monitoring and assessment to proper safety protocols, and demand that Congress expand and extend emergency paid leave protections beyond those included in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to include all working people, federal tax credits for emergency paid sick and family leave in the public sector, and availability through the school year in 2021. These are the required public health interventions to protect our students, educators, workers, and communities during a public health crisis, and what will allow a safe and equitable reopening of our schools, the economy, and the country as a whole.

Sincerely,
The undersigned public health professionals and organizations

CC: Secretary Betsy DeVos
Secretary Alex Azar
Speaker Nancy Pelosi
Leader Mitch McConnell
Leader Chuck Schumer
Leader Kevin McCarthy

Organizations:
500 Women Scientists
American Psychiatric Association Women’s Caucus
American Public Health Association
Center for Health Progress
Central Valley Air Quality Coalition
Collaborative for Health Equity Cook County
Community Health Evaluation and Research
Futures Without Violence
Health Care for America Now (HCAN)
Health Outreach Partners
Health Professionals for Equality and Community Empowerment
Health Resources in Action
Human Impact Partners
Idaho Public Health Association
Little Lobbyists
Louisiana Public Health Association
Lower Drug Prices Now
Maine Children’s Alliance
National Advocates for Pregnant Women
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Social Workers WV Chapter
National Rural Social Work Caucus
NC Public Health Association
Planned Parenthood South Atlantic
Protect Our Care
Public Health Alliance of Southern California
Public Health Awakened
The Institute for Healing Justice and Equity, Saint Louis University
The Praxis Project
Wellspring Healing Center
Wisconsin Public Health Association
Women's Health Institute
WV FREE

**Individuals:**
Daiana Acevedo CHW
Jennifer Acosta MPH
Anthony Adamgbo Dr.
Moreno Adela, MD
Avanti Adhia ScD
Mahwish Ahmad MBBS, MPH
Angela Aidala PhD
Jenny Ajl MSN, APRN, MPH
Sunya Akhter MS
Sherry Alderman MD, MPH, IMHM-E, FAAP
Brianna Aldridge MPH
Laura Alexander MPH, LCSW
Daniel Alohan MPHc
Dr Maria Alvarez PhD
Elizbeth Ambriz MPH, DrPH
Mary Anglin PhD, MPH
Elizabeth Arleo MD
Marice Ashe JD, MPH
Katherine Austin-Evelyn MSc MPH
Emily Caesar MPH, MSW
Emilyn Cahn
Brigid Cakouros DrPH candidate
Stephanie Caldwell MPH
Bradley Cameron MEd
Elissa Campanella JD
Leslie Carnahan PhD, MPH
Mary Carney MPH
Jacqueline Carter MPH
Yuri Cartier MPH
Christine Caruso PhD, MPH
Suzanne Cashman ScD, MS
Analucia Castillo
Denise Cawley MHA
Phillippa Chadd MPH
Celina Chan MPH, MCP
Kayshin Chan MPH
Annie Chen PhD
Miriam Cherry JD
Kate Cheyne MPH
Susan Choi PhD
Tim Choi MPH
Jessica Chumsky MS
Rachel Clare MPH, FNP
Cory Cole MPH
Katie Collins
Caroline Conena MPH
Kurt Conklin MPH, MCHES
Alexis Cooke MPH, PhD
Elizabeth Corcoran MPH, CPH
Lindsay Corrales MPH
Brandon Cortez MD
Candace Cross
Margaret Cunningham RN
Anna Cupito MPH
Jacob Cutler
Laurel Dallmeyer MD
Christiane Dammann MD
John David PhD
Jennifer Davis MPH
Yuki Davis MPH
Roseann Day MD
Emerson Delacroix MACP, LLP
Caitlin Deliso MPH
Catherine DeLorey RN, MPH, DrPH
Jennifer Devries MD, MPH
Saneta Devuono-Powell JD, MCP
Roni Diamant-Wilson PhD
Fay Dillof
Sue Dinsdale
Emilie Doan Van MPH
Addie Donley Chw
Kelsey Donnellan MPH
Raven Dorsey MSW, Certified Doula
Kelly Dougherty MPH
Benard Dreyer MD
Parker Duncan MD, MPH
Elise Duwe MD, PhD
Angela Eastlund MS
Marlene Edelstein APRN, MSN, MPH
Caroline Efird MPH
Kristen Ehrenberger MD PhD
Rebecca Eiseman MPH
Alexa Eisenberg MPH
Joseph Engeda PhD
Shannon Ericson MSW, LCSW
Farah Erzouki MPH
Lili Farhang MPH
Becket Feierbach PhD
Anna Ferrarie MPH
Dina Fico MPH
Tamara Fils-Aime
Robin Fink MPH
Taylor Firestine
Jennifer Fish MD
Deborah Fisher B.S.W, M.Ed., ED.S
Natalie Flath MPH
Paul Fleming PhD, MPH
Laravic Flores MD
Andrea Flynn MPH
Hannah Forsberg MPH
Mary Margaret Fouse-Bishop BSN
Leah Fowler JD
Salvador Franco FNP, RN
Jessica Friedman MD, MPH
Susan Frietsche JD
Liza Fues JD
Jenna Gaarde MPH
Breyonna Gaines
Deborah Gallegos RN
Emily Galpern MPH
Kris Gamayo LMFT
Rujuta Gaonkar MPH
Jared Garrison-Jakel MD MPH
Lindsey Gaydos RN
Megan Gaydos MPH
Kristina Gelardi PhD
Laura Gibson PhD
Sarah Gilmore PhD
Angela Giordano MPH
Emily Giovanelli
Andrew Goldstein MD, MPH
Vanessa Gomez MPH
Linda González MSW
Camille Gonzalez MPH
Todd Nicholas Goodenow MSN
Jessica Goodkind PhD
Nichole Goodsmith MD, PhD
Ali Goodyear MPH
Solange Gould MPH, DrPH
Amanda Goumas MPH
Rebecca Graham
Alexis Grant
Linda Green MD
Ellen Green MD
Tony Grutman
Monica Guo
Lynda Gyles
Clara Haignere MPH, PhD
Ashley Hall MSc
Arden Handler DrPH
Lydia Hanson MPH, MSW
Linda Hardy
Paula Johnson Professor of Law
Camille Jones MD, MPH
Meredith Jones MPH
Kiran Joshi MD, MPH
Farah Kader MPH
Linda Kahn MPH
Lucy Kalanithi MD, FACP
Ariana Katz MPH
Molly Keane MPH
Heidi Keating MPH
Brianna Keefe-Oates MPH
Tom Kieffer MPH
Brian King MD
Tracey Kirui
Marissa Kluk MPH
Wendy Kohatsu MD
Betty Kolod MD
Peggy Korpela MPH
Sarah Koster FNP, MPH, MSN
Nancy Krieger PhD
Liz Kroboth MPH
Shakti Kroopkin
Alina Kung MD, MS
Marianna Kuttothara MPH
Vanessa Lam MPH, MPP
Heesun Lee MPH
Annie Le MD, MPH
Sinang Lee MPH
Mia Lei BSPH
Jennifer Lemberger MLIS, MPH
Esther Lerman MA, LMFT
Shelly Lev-Er RN
Betty Wolder Levin PhD
Daniel Lichtenstein-Boris MPH
Ashley Lidow MPH
Rebecca Linekin MBA
Gabrielle Lopez MPH
Panna Lossy MD
Kimberly Lundeen
Erin Lutes MS, RN, PHN, CNS
Michael Lyon MS
Jennifer Morgan PhD
Juliana Morris MD, EdM
Nicole Morris MTS
Haley Mousseau MA
Alyssa Mouton MPH, MPP
Isabel Muñoz MPH
Bridget Mulkerrins MSW, LICSW
Courtney Mulroy BSPH
Lauren Murfree MS
Brynne Musser MPH
Noah Nattell MD, MSCI
Margaret Nemitz MPH
Namphuong Nguyen MPH
Elena Nieves M.Ed.
Jessica Nila MPH
James Nolan MPH
Alma Ochoa-Del Toro MPH, CHES
Michele Ochsner PhD
Maria Ockenfels RN, BSN, PHN
Martha Ockenfels-Martinez MPH
Alice Odell DNP, MPH, FNP-BC, MSN, RN
Briana Ohene-Owens
Carleigh Olson MPH
Michael Ondik MD
Maggie Ornstein MPH, PhD
Stephany Ortiz BS, MPHc
Melissa Palay MSN, MPH
Deborah Passey PhD
Amy Patel MPH
Katrin Patterson MPH
Nadine Peacock PhD
Robin Pearce MPH
Emalee Pearson MPH, MSW
Ruth Penn MD
Kara Percival MD, MPH
Karen Peters DrPH
Robert Pezzolesi MPH
Amber Piatt MPH
Gladys Picó-Gleason RN
Eric Pierce LCSW
Tomar Pierson-Brown J.D., LL.M
Adam Pilarski
Jessica Plante MPH
Karyn Pomerantz MMP, MLS
Laura Ponchick MPH
Lauren Powell MPA, PhD
Amy Preut Duncan MPH
Carol Prost MA, MED.
Sukhdip Purewal Boparai MPH
Nandita Rajshekar MPH
Sarah Ramirez PhD, MPH
Socorro Ramos-Aviles
Vernellia Randall BSN, MSN, JD
Maryani Rasidjan PhD
J.C. Ratliff
Jillian Rausa MPH
Eileen Reed JD
Maureen Rees MPH
Beleny Reese MPH
Rebecca Reeve PhD
Lauren Rendón LMSW, MPH
Kayla Ringelheim MBA/MPH
Lucy Rios
Grace Robbins MPH
Calpurnyia Roberts PhD
Alissa Robertson MS, RDN
Isabelle Rocca
Kimberly Rodgers MA
Joshua Rodriguez MD, MPH
Cristina Rodriguez-Hart PhD
Tara Romano MS, MPH
Ally Rooker MPH
Aliya Rubenstein JD, MPH
Janis Sanchez PhD
Fabiola Santiago MPH
Jamie Sarfeh
Nana Sarkodee-Adoo
Sara Satinsky MPH, MCRP
Renate Savich MD
Nadia Sawicki J.D., M.Be.
Dvera Saxton PhD
Katherine Schaff DrPH, MPH
Holly Scheider MPH
Tristen Schmidt MS
Chris Schneider
Rosalyn Schroeder MPH, MSc
Amy Schulz PhD, MPH
Adam Schwartz M.D.
Hannah Scott MPH Student
Carla Seet MPH Candidate
Susan Seibold-Simpson PhD, MPH, RN, FNP
Erin Seidler MPA
Jess Seline MPH
Heena Shah DrPH
Mansi Shah MD
Emma Share
Melanie Shefchik MA, RN
Lila Sheira MPH
Darielle Sherrod MPH
Yeri Shon MPH, MSW
Mimi Shum
Sylvianne Shurman
Ally Siegler MPH
Maribel Sierra MPH
Stephanie Silvera PhD
Jeremiah Simon MPH
Sophia Simon-Ortiz MPH
Sofia Singer BA
Meher Singh MPH
Martina Sinopoli MD
Jessica Siu
Darius Sivin PhD
Erin Slack MPH
Susan Smith RN, PHN
Elliott Smith MPH
Amy Smith MPH
Esme Snow MSPH, MA
Elizabeth Sohn MHS
Rosemary Sokas MD, MOH
Clara H. Song MD
Grace Song MPH
Brenda Soto
Caile Spear PhD, MCHES
Andy Spears PhD
Liam Spurgeon
Louise Square BA
Susan Staggs Ph.D.
Leslie Stalnaker MPH
Ogie Strogatz MSPH
Kasey Sumeriski
Patrice Sutton MPH
Leika Suzumra RD, MPH
Arianna Taboada MSW, MSPH
Gloria Tavera PhD, MD Candidate
Yakira Teitel MD, MPH
Judith Tejero MPH
Ana Tellez Gatica MA
Afomeia Tesfai MPH
Ariana Thompson-Lastad PhD
Christopher Tilden PhD
Lana Tilley MPH
Yoongi Tom MD
Samantha Torres-Durant MPH
Tarlise Townsend PhD
Yesim Tozan PhD
Shannon Tracey
Carlie Trott PhD
Janell Tryon MPH
Tanya Tschaikowsky MPH
Kristin Turney PhD
Omar Ullah
Amber Uskali MPH
Ashley Van Riper
Kate Vander Tuig MPH
Claudia Vargas MPH
Liza Vertinsky PhD JD
Emilia Vignola MSPH
Sarah Walsh PhD, MPH
David Wang
Jennifer Ware
Sherry Watkins
Sidney Watson JD
Lara Weiss MPH
Nomi Weiss-Laxer PhD, MPH
Carwina Weng JD
Jessie Wesley MPH, MCP
Jennifer Weuve MPH, ScD
Margaret Wheeler MD
Alanna White BA
Shelley White PhD, MPH
Elizabeth Wieand, MSPH
LaDonna Williams
Leslie Williams, PhD
Donna Willmott, MPH
Anne Wise MD, MPH
Samuel Wisniewski, M.S.
Lindsey Wixom
Caroline Wixom MPH
Sarah Wolf MPH, RD
Tara Woodward
Erin Wright MSN, RN
Beck Wright MPH
James Wu MD, MPH
Sarah Wylie MPH
Ruqaiijah Yearby JD, MPH
Mallory Yung MPH
Raina Yusufova
Eva Zaret MPH
Corona Zhang MPH Student
Leilani Zimmerman FNP-C
Kristine Zimmermann PhD, MPH
Isaiah Zoschke
Michael Zvolensky PhD