



July 17, 2020

Senator Rob Portman  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator Portman:

Everyone, no matter where they live or what they look like, deserves stability and security. That's why we are asking you to advocate to include a \$10 billion emergency fund for individuals and families with the lowest incomes in the next COVID-19 federal relief package.

We ask you to do everything you can to help stabilize the lives of Ohioans who are in crisis now. According to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, nearly 1.5 million Ohioans have filed unemployment claims since mid-March. That's more than in the last three years combined. Many have been out of work for nearly three months and are struggling to put food on the table, pay the rent, and afford the basics to support their families. Reopening Ohio has resulted in increasing rates of COVID-19, but it has not restored our economy. Millions of Ohioans continue to struggle.

Across the country and here in Ohio, far too many families don't know where their next meal will come from. A recent national survey by the [Hamilton Project](#) found that by the end of April, more than one in five households say their children are not getting enough to eat. A different survey recently released by the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that more than 500,000 Ohioans were unable to pay rent in May due to financial insecurity. The same poll indicated that more than 360,000 renters in Ohio have no confidence in their ability to pay rent next month.

The Pandemic TANF Assistance Act (S. 3672), introduced by Sen. Ron Wyden (OR), would address this need. It creates a new grants program, The Coronavirus Emergency Assistance Grant program, that would provide \$10 billion to states, territories and tribes to address the unmet needs of families and individuals with the lowest incomes. This fund would allow Ohio to provide emergency assistance to families and individuals who have been left out of other relief measures.

The Coronavirus Emergency Assistance Grant program could provide eligible Ohioans with short-term cash, non-cash and in-kind assistance to address their basic needs. It could also provide subsidized employment opportunities when it is safe to do so. It is designed to:

- Help struggling Ohioans avoid evictions, foreclosure and utility cut-offs;
- Prevent children from being removed from their homes;
- Provide resources to Ohioans to help to buy necessities like food, diapers, and personal hygiene supplies; and
- Prevent mental and physical health issues that accompany extreme stress.

This program will make a tangible difference in the lives of children, adults, and families across Ohio. It will help families stay fed and relieve their hardship during this challenging time. These resources will help Ohioans live with dignity and give them more purchasing power to spend on basic needs, which can help stimulate our local economies. This program will also help prevent even greater hardship and insecurity for children, individuals and families.

Policy Matters Ohio hopes we can count on you to advocate to include \$10 billion for the Coronavirus Emergency Assistance Grants in the next COVID-19 stimulus package to help individuals and families with the lowest incomes. The Coronavirus Emergency Assistance Grant Program would help provide more stability and security for Ohioans who are in crisis now.

Thank you for being a champion for Ohio. And thank you for all your leadership to improve the quality of life for families and individuals with the lowest incomes whose needs are too often forgotten during times of crisis.

Sincerely,



Hannah Halbert, Executive Director  
Policy Matters Ohio



Will Petrik, Budget Researcher  
Policy Matters Ohio