

22 February 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
U.S House of Representatives
H-232 US. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Leader Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, US. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
S-230 US Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McConnell:

We have entered the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly half a million Americans have died, and we collectively have pandemic fatigue. However, there is cause for optimism 1.7 million Americans are getting vaccinated each day, and cases are falling from their peak of 300,000 in early January. Although that is promising news, now is not the time to take our foot off the gas from the evidenced based public health measures that we know work, with multiple virus variants looming, ready to launch us into a fourth wave.

As you may be aware, public health studies have shown that case clusters are often found when people show up at their workplace with mild symptoms. Many people cannot afford to lose days of work or fear they will be fired if they don't show up. Simply put, no testing, government, or health-care program can stop the spread if worksites are a COVID petri dish. No one should have to choose between feeding their family and keeping their co-workers safe. **Paid sick leave is a public health issue and continuing to guarantee paid sick leave will help to curb the pandemic.**

We applaud Congress for passing the Families First Coronavirus Act (FFCA) in the CARES bill in the spring of 2020 to address this public health issue by providing employer tax credits to incentivize paid sick leave for small and medium size businesses. In the year end COVID relief package Congress extended these tax credits through the end of March for employers who chose to voluntarily give their employees paid sick leave, instead of mandating it. To curb the pandemic as fast as possible, all workers should be given access to paid sick leave.

We can keep our economy moving forward and get our children back to school, but only if we get the pandemic under control. Paid sick leave can reduce the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces and communities by removing the barrier to employees staying home if they might have the virus. Even one infection can set off an outbreak. Yet this important provision to provide sick leave employer tax credits **is set to expire without reauthorization on March 31, 2021.** The science is clear: Paid sick leave isn't a partisan issue – it is humans against the virus – and is an important tool to ensure we win this fight and get back to normal.

Therefore, **we urge you to include paid sick leave tax credits in the budget reconciliation bill currently being negotiated.**

Our nation has experienced a great deal of suffering and loss at the hands of this pandemic. There is a light at the end of this tunnel though, as a new normal is coming. Until we reach that day, our country needs paid sick leave for all workers to save lives and keep the economy moving.

Signed,
American Public Health Association
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Big Cities Health Coalition

Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security
National Association of County and City Health Officials
Resolve to Save Lives, an Initiative of Vital Strategies
Trust for America's Health

