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OFFICE OF SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS

PASSING THE SENATE BUDGET RESOLUTION IS NEEDED TO PROVIDE RELIEF FOR MILLIONS OF FAMILIES, WORKERS, AND BUSINESSES

Our country is currently experiencing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression and the worst public health emergency in over 100 years.

January marked the deadliest month of the pandemic with 90,000 Americans losing their lives as a result of COVID-19. In the midst of all of this, over 90 million Americans are uninsured or underinsured and can't afford to go to a doctor when they get sick. The isolation and anxiety caused by the pandemic has resulted in a huge increase in mental illness.

Over half of American workers are living paycheck to paycheck, including millions of essential workers who put their lives on the line every day. More than 24 million Americans are unemployed, under employed or have given up looking for work, while hunger in this country is at the highest level in decades.

Because of lack of income, up to 40 million Americans face the threat of eviction, and many owe thousands in back rent. This is on top of the 500,000 who are already homeless.

Meanwhile, the wealthiest people in this country are becoming much richer, and income and wealth inequality is soaring. Incredibly, during the pandemic, 660 billionaires in America have increased their wealth by \$1.1 trillion.

As a result of the pandemic education in this country from childcare to graduate school, is in chaos. The majority of young people in this country have seen their education disrupted and it is likely that hundreds of colleges will soon cease to exist.

In this moment of unprecedented crises, the Senate must respond through unprecedented action.

The Budget Resolution that the Senate will be debating this week will enable us to fast track President Biden's \$1.9 trillion emergency COVID-relief through reconciliation with 51 votes.

Reconciliation does not have to be partisan. Reconciliation bills have been passed on a bi-partisan basis to create the Children's Health Insurance Program, the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Reconciliation is not a new or unique concept. Republicans used reconciliation to pass trillions of dollars in tax breaks to the wealthy and large corporations. Republicans used reconciliation to try to throw up to 32 million Americans off of healthcare by repealing the Affordable Care Act. Republicans used reconciliation to drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

If Republicans could use reconciliation to help the wealthy and the powerful, we can use reconciliation to help Americans recover from the worst economic and public health crisis in the modern history of our country.

What does this mean for the average American?

It means that we will be able to aggressively crush the pandemic and enable the American people to return to their jobs and schools. This will require a federally led emergency program to produce the quantity of vaccines that we need and get them into peoples' arms as quickly as possible.

It means that during the severe economic downturn we're experiencing, we must make sure that all Americans have the financial resources they need to live with dignity. We must increase the \$600 in direct payments for every working-class adult and child that were recently passed to \$2,000, raise the minimum wage to a living wage, expand unemployment benefits, expand the Child Tax Credit, and prevent eviction, homelessness and hunger.

It means that, during this raging pandemic, we must provide healthcare to millions of Americans who are uninsured and under-insured.

It means that we will be able to cut the child poverty rate in half and end the international embarrassment of having the highest childhood poverty rate of nearly every major country on earth.

Here are just a few of the specific provisions the Budget Resolution will enable the Senate to pass under reconciliation:

- **\$2,000 Direct Payments:** The Budget Resolution keeps the promise we made to boost the \$600 direct payments passed in December to \$2,000 for every working class American in the country.
- **Minimum wage:** The Budget Resolution will enable the Senate to raise the federal minimum wage from a starvation wage of \$7.25 an hour to a living wage. In the United States of America a job should lift you out of poverty, not keep you in it. Raising the minimum wage will have a substantial and direct impact on the federal budget.

- **\$400 a week in Supplemental Unemployment Benefits:** The Budget Resolution will provide the funding necessary to increase the \$300 a week in supplemental unemployment benefits that 18 million Americans currently rely on to \$400 a week.
- **\$3,000/\$3,600 Child Tax Credit:** The Budget Resolution will enable the Senate to expand the Child Tax Credit from \$2,000 to \$3,000 and to \$3,600 for children under the age of 6. This provision alone will lift nearly 10 million children out of poverty.
- **Earned Income Tax Credit:** The Budget Resolution will enable the Senate to nearly triple the Earned Income Tax Credit and provide tax relief to more than 17 million low-income workers – many of whom are on the frontlines of the pandemic.
- **\$4,000 Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit:** The Budget Resolution will enable the Senate to expand the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit so that working families can receive up to \$4,000 for the childcare expenses of one kid and up to \$8,000 for two kids.
- **\$350 billion to prevent mass layoffs of public sector workers in state and local governments:** The Budget Resolution will enable the Senate to provide \$350 billion in financial assistance to state and local governments to prevent the mass layoff of public sector workers. During the pandemic, state and local governments have laid off 1.4 million workers – including 50,000 in December alone. The Congressional Budget Office has said that the Number One best “bang for the buck” of all the money Congress has passed so far is aid to state and local governments.
- **Vaccine distribution:** The Budget Resolution will enable the Senate to provide robust funding for vaccine distribution to get vaccines in the arms of the American people, to defeat the coronavirus and to reopen the economy.
- **Healthcare:** The Budget Resolution will enable the Senate to expand Medicaid, community health centers, the National Health Service Corps, mental healthcare and provide \$17 billion to the VA to make sure our veterans receive the healthcare they have earned and deserve.
- **Child Care:** The Budget Resolution will allow the Senate to provide 875,000 kids with the childcare they desperately need. It will also provide 6 months of grants to 85,000 child care centers and 60,000 family child care homes.
- **Pensions:** The Budget Resolution will enable the Senate to protect the retirement benefits of millions of workers and retirees in troubled multi-employer pension plans. As a result of the greed on Wall Street, workers and retirees in multi-employer pension plans are in danger of seeing their retirement benefits cut by as much as 65 percent. That is unacceptable.

When a worker is promised a pension benefit after a lifetime of work that promise must be kept. By shoring up the multiemployer pension system and the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation, this resolution will prevent the pensions of millions of Americans from being cut.

- **Nutrition:** The Budget Resolution will enable the Senate to provide nutrition assistance to tens of millions of hungry families with children, the disabled and the elderly by expanding SNAP, WIC and the Pandemic EBT program.
- **Housing:** The Budget Resolution will provide rental and utility assistance and mortgage relief to millions of tenants and homeowners who are in danger of being thrown out of their homes and onto the street. In America today, over 14 million Americans owe an average of \$5,800 in back rent. The Budget Resolution will enable the Senate to provide these struggling Americans with the relief they need to stay in their apartments.
- **Homeless Assistance:** During the midst of winter, there are hundreds of thousands of people experiencing homelessness, many with underlying health challenges. This resolution provides investments in appropriate housing that will protect their health and help decrease COVID-19 transmissions with safe, and socially distant housing.
- **Public Transit:** the resolution provides relief for transit agencies who have been deeply impacted by the pandemic and forced to cut service and jobs in 2020. Public transportation agencies estimate they face more than \$39 billion of additional costs and revenue losses related to the COVID-19 crisis that could result in cuts to essential services and worker layoffs. They need our help.
- **Broadband:** The Budget Resolution will provide the funding necessary to invest in broadband so that millions of public school students will receive the high-speed internet services they need for their education. In America today, at least 15 million public school students in rural areas and inner-cities live in homes without an internet connection. That has got to change.
- **Amtrak:** The Budget Resolution will provide the funding necessary to allow Amtrak to rehire 1,500 workers who were involuntarily furloughed last year, and to restore regular service to more remote communities that rely on Amtrak as a link to economic centers.

The reconciliation instructions included in the Budget Resolution enjoy the support of the overwhelming majority of the American people.

- Nearly [70 percent of voters](#) supported President Biden's \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 plan.
- 83 percent of the American people support boosting direct payments from \$600 to \$2,000.

- 64 percent of Americans support raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour.
- 62 percent of voters support additional unemployment benefits.

In Billions

Agriculture	\$23B
Banking	\$89B
Commerce	\$36B
EPW	\$3B
Finance	\$1,296B
Foreign Relations	\$10B
HELP	\$305B
HSGAC	\$51B
Indian Affairs	\$9B
Small Business	\$50B
Veterans Affairs	\$17B

TOTAL: \$1,889B

The American people want us to act boldly and they want us to act now. Instead of listening to wealthy campaign contributors, it is time for the Senate to listen to the needs of working families, the elderly, the sick, the disabled and the poor. And that is exactly what this Budget Resolution will accomplish.