

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 13, 2021

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

Dear Madam Speaker:

We write to you in appreciation for your leadership as our Democratic Majority enters the final stage of negotiations on the Build Back Better Act. As we noted in our letter to you in April, the CPC agrees that President Biden has made a compelling case to the American people that government can, and should, be a force for good in this country, and we agree that bold investments in good-paying union jobs, climate action, immigration reform, and caregiving are essential to uplifting families and building back better. This is our moment to make the President's vision a reality.

As progressives, we have been clear about our goals for this legislation. This bill, along with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, offers us a once-in-a-generation opportunity to enact transformational policies that lift up people's lives. Specifically, the CPC settled on five core priority areas: 1) strengthening the care economy with child care, paid leave and investments in home- and community-based care; 2) investing in affordable housing; 3) reforming Medicare to lower prescription drug prices, while expanding the earned benefits to include vision, dental, and hearing benefits for our seniors; 4) meaningfully tackling the climate crisis; and 5) keeping our promise to pursue necessary immigration reform that benefits our economy and budget. We're proud that these priorities are shared across the Democratic Caucus and by the President himself.

Much has been made in recent weeks about the compromises necessary to enact this transformative agenda. We have been told that we can either adequately fund a small number of investments or legislate broadly, but only make a shallow, short-term impact. We would argue that this is a false choice. Rather, a majority of our 96 CPC members agree that the following principles should guide our caucus' legislative strategy:

- **Shorter, Transformative Investments:** We know that the President's agenda and his proposed investments in the American people are [overwhelmingly popular](#)^[1]. If given a choice between legislating narrowly or broadly, we strongly encourage you to choose the latter, and make robust investments over a shorter window. Tax expenditures should also be treated the same way as direct investments. This will help make the case for our party's ability to govern, and establish a track record of success that will pave the way for a long-term extension of benefits. It is important to remember that different strategies affect

different populations of people, and across our districts, our constituents are grateful we are fighting for them on a multitude of issues that will be transformative for working families, seniors, students, and children. We cannot pit childcare against housing, or paid leave against home- and community-based care.

- **Touch people's lives immediately:** Where given an option, we should err on the side of structuring legislation so that benefits flow to the American people as quickly as possible, both to assist the Biden Recovery and to demonstrate our commitment to tangibly improving the lives of the American people.
- **Provide Universal Benefits to Ensure Lasting Change:** We strongly believe that this is the moment to demonstrate to the American people that regardless of geography, race, gender, or class, Democrats believe that everyone has a right to affordable child care, pre-K, clean water, and a community college education. We can choose to strengthen the bond Americans have to one another by proposing universal social insurance benefits that broadly benefit all Americans, or we can pursue complicated methods of means testing that the wealthy and powerful will use to divide us with false narratives about “makers” and “takers.” We can structure these programs to eliminate false cliffs or administrative burdens that leave out the neediest or those areas with higher costs of living. As with the ACA subsidies in the American Rescue Plan, Congress can create a child care benefit where no family pays more than a certain amount of their income for those programs. Universal programs are always the most politically durable and popular investments.
- **Keeping the President's Commitment to Racial Equity:** President Biden has committed to ensuring racial equity and justice are at the center of his administration's policy making. The Build Back Better Act in its current form allows for some of the most meaningful government investments in communities of color in decades. It addresses needs disproportionately felt by Black and Brown Americans, like housing, and corrects inequalities in fields of work that are primarily held by people of color, like home-based and elder care. Additionally, it addresses needs of thousands of undocumented individuals many of whom have served as essential workers during the Covid-19 pandemic, who have long been vulnerable to discrimination, labor abuses and denial of equal protection under the law due to their immigration status. If we cut those programs, we reduce the broadly transformative power of this legislation, and we once again fall behind on our promises to ensure racial equity.

We thank you for the opportunity to reiterate our priorities and lay out our recommendations for the path ahead. This bill offers us a chance to fundamentally transform the relationship between the American people and their government. We look forward to continuing to work with you and our committee chairs to enact an ambitious Build Back Better Act with the speed and urgency that you have rightly advocated.

Sincerely,



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Congressional Progressive Caucus Chair



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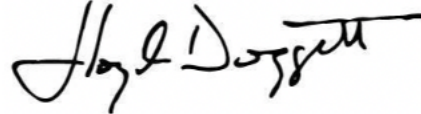
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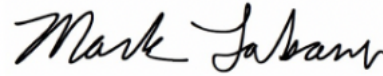
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Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress
CPC Executive Board Member
at Large

CC:

The Honorable Joseph Biden, President of the United States

The Honorable Charles Schumer, U.S. Senate Majority Leader

[1] Anthony Salvanto, Jennifer De Pinto, Kabir Khanna, Fred Backus, “What's in Democrats' Build Back Better plan? A lot of Americans don't know” *CBS News* (2021): <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/democrats-build-back-better-americans-dont-know-opinion-poll/>