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The White House  
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Leader Charles “Chuck” Schumer  
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Speaker Nancy Pelosi  
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Leader Mitch McConnell  
S-230, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Leader Kevin McCarthy  
H-204, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

February 4, 2021

To Members of Congress and President Biden:

We are writing to encourage your careful consideration of the approach to coronavirus relief recently advanced by Senator Susan Collins and nine of her colleagues. While the details of this plan are not perfect, they point toward a more effective and responsible approach to addressing the challenges posed by coronavirus and the economic pain that has accompanied it.

President Biden has stressed his willingness to work in good faith across party lines to develop valuable legislation with bipartisan support. This is an opportunity to do precisely that. Bipartisan support exists for more targeted alternatives that apply resources where they will do the most good. There is no reason to sacrifice precision for speed. We can do both.

In several key policy areas where Republicans and Democrats agree on the value of new legislation, the provisions of the coalition proposal offer a better way to achieve the same goals. They include:

- **Supplemental Unemployment Benefits:** There is no doubt finding work is not as easy as it was before. We can help those who have lost their jobs without making it harder for them to reenter the workforce and our economy to recover. The coalition alternative would provide months of additional relief with greater flexibility, creating an opportunity for Congress to revisit these provisions if appropriate, and in a manner that does not disadvantage the workforce or undermine economic recovery.
- **Direct Payments:** Direct payments should be focused on those most in need of assistance. The coalition proposal incorporates income thresholds that help the payments get to the people who need them, but not the people who don't. Early research shows that initial funding was not targeted to those in need. We should learn from that mistake and do better.
- **Education Assistance:** State and local education departments have already received significant new federal funding both in the CARES Act and in the COVID relief package enacted in December. Congress should not authorize a new round of additional funds for a system that is currently failing many of our students. Instead, any new education funding should be designed to go directly to families.
- **Overcoming the Virus:** The challenges of supply and distribution of vaccines have less to do with available funding than with decisions about priority setting and regulatory approvals. We urge Congress and the administration to have a laser focus on increased testing as well as vaccine production and distribution because ultimately, the only way to truly recover stronger is when people have the confidence to confidently re-enter the economy.

Any COVID relief spending during these extraordinary times should be timely, temporary, and targeted to those hit hardest by the pandemic. With the national debt at nearly \$28 trillion and rising, policymakers should take seriously their charge to faithfully steward taxpayer dollars. Congress has already provided trillions of dollars in assistance to help states, localities, and the American people cope with the impact of coronavirus. It is essential that we not simply throw money at this problem.

As policymakers debate the scope of this package, some express the view that “the risk is not in going too big, it’s in going too small.” That is a false choice. Taking a timely, temporary, and targeted approach isn’t “small.” It’s smart. Washington repeatedly confuses big spending with smart or effective policy. The result has been bad policy, disappointing results, and more debt. Americans deserve better than the same ‘go big’ rationalizations that seem to come whenever there’s a crisis to leverage.

President Biden has spoken about the importance of building bipartisan support for measures to overcome the pandemic and set our economy on the right course. The proposal put forth by Senator Collins and her colleagues is a smart and sensible approach with key elements that already have support from both parties. It should serve as the framework for negotiations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brent Gardner". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Brent Gardner  
Chief Government Affairs Officer  
Americans for Prosperity