



House Democrats Secured Historic Wins for Students, Workers, and Families in End-of-Year Spending Package and COVID-19 Relief

To advance equity in education, the end-of-year spending package:

- *Expands the Pell Grant program* by making hundreds of thousands of students newly eligible for Pell and increasing award amounts for millions of current Pell recipients, and makes it easier for students to predict their eligibility.
- *Makes it easier for students to apply – and qualify – for federal student aid* by streamlining the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and expanding outreach and awareness activities to encourage FAFSA completion, with a focus on low-income students and families.
- *Expands opportunities for justice-involved individuals* to get an education and successfully reenter their communities by providing incarcerated students access to Pell Grants.
- *Discharges loans made to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)* under the HBCU Capital Financing Loan program, providing \$1.34 billion in relief.
- *Eliminates a confusing and punitive restriction* that limits eligibility for subsidized federal loans among low-income students.
- *Restores Pell Grant eligibility for defrauded students*, including those who attended shuttered for-profit colleges like ITT Technical Institutes and Corinthian Colleges.
- *Permanently strikes the prohibition on the use of federal funds to promote school integration (General Education Provisions Act, Section 426)*—a huge step toward fulfilling the promise of Brown v. Board of Education and desegregating America's public schools

To improve health coverage and consumer protections, the end-of-year spending package:

- *Bans surprise medical billing* and protects consumers in emergency— including air ambulance—and non-emergency care situations by limiting consumers' cost-sharing to the in-network amount. The package also establishes an independent dispute resolution process for providers and payers to settle payment disputes.
- *Improves transparency* by requiring brokers and consultants to disclose direct or indirect compensation received for referrals to group health plan sponsors and individual market consumers.
- *Improves provider directories* by requiring health plans and insurers to verify and update directories. The package also protects consumers from financial harm when relying in good faith on inaccurate information.
- *Provides continued coverage for patients with complex care needs* for 90 days when a provider leaves the health plan's network, ensuring that a patient can continue a course of care without facing out-of-network rates.
- *Strengthens enforcement of mental health parity* by requiring health plans and insurers to perform internal compliance analyses and increasing oversight by the Departments of Labor, the Treasury, and Health and Human Services.
- *Supports state all-payer claims databases* and requires the Secretary of Labor to convene an advisory committee and develop a standardized reporting format for group health plans.

- *Prohibits gag clauses in contracts* that restrict access to provider cost and quality data therefore improving transparency in health costs.

To ensure Americans can access healthy nutrition benefits, the end-of-year spending package:

- *Ensures that millions of young children can access needed nutrition benefits* by clarifying that states may issue P-EBT benefits to children under the age of 6 who live in households receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and residing in an area in which schools or childcare facilities are closed or operating with reduced hours or attendance without the need to verify childcare enrollment at the individual household level.
- *Provides additional flexibility and clarity to states implementing P-EBT* to ensure that all children in need can be reached.
- *Provides emergency relief to help school meal and child and adult care food programs*, which are in dire need of financial assistance, to continue serving children and families. Provides as much funding as necessary to carry out these payments.
- *Protects college student eligibility for SNAP* during the COVID-19 public health emergency by allowing students with zero expected family contribution to be eligible for SNAP regardless of work status, and by clarifying that work study eligibility – rather than enrollment – is sufficient to confer eligibility for SNAP. Requires the Secretary of Education to inform students and federal financial aid applicants of SNAP eligibility requirements for college students during the pandemic. This will ensure that college students do not lose SNAP eligibility due to work study or job loss during the pandemic.
- *Requires the Department of Agriculture to establish a task force on food delivery models* in the WIC program so that participants have access to curbside pickup and other safe food purchasing methods during the pandemic.
- *Provides \$100 million for Elder Justice Act programs* to address the abuse, neglect, and maltreatment of older adults.

To help Americans struggling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the end-of-year spending package:

- *Provides \$82 billion for the Education Stabilization Fund (ESF)*. Specifically, \$54 billion for K-12 in part to help support HVAC repair and replacement to mitigate virus transmission and reopen classrooms. Additionally, institutes for higher learning will receive roughly \$21 billion.
- *Provides \$10 Billion for childcare assistance* to help get parents back to work and keep childcare providers open.
- *Ensures fair distribution of Community Services Block Grant Act (CSBG) programs*, including to small states, so that community action agencies can continue to provide valuable support to struggling workers and families.
- *Provides \$175 million in emergency funding for Older Americans Act nutrition programs*, including \$7 million for tribal nutrition programs.
- *Provides needed flexibility to area agencies on aging and state units on aging* to ensure that older adults' nutritional needs can continue to be met safely during the pandemic.
- *Extends tax credit for employers who voluntarily provide sick leave* for COVID-19-related purposes, the tax credit was first created under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act
- *Expands Job Corps eligibility requirements* during the COVID-19 emergency by eliminating drug testing for those engaged in distance learning and extending the age limit to complete the program from age 24 to age 25.