

February 3, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As the Administration continues to address the COVID-19 pandemic and considers requesting a supplemental spending package that includes additional COVID relief, we write today to urge you to include in the request the reinstatement of guaranteed emergency paid sick and family caregiving leave for all U.S. workers, similar to what was passed in the bipartisan Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) at the beginning of this health crisis. This would ensure that individuals with serious illnesses who are exposed to or contract COVID-19 and their caregivers do not have to forfeit income in order to treat their illness, protect themselves from exposure, or get a vaccine or booster that will provide robust protection.

The 20 undersigned patient advocacy and partner organizations represent patients with serious illnesses and conditions including cancer, ALS, muscular dystrophy, epilepsy, hemophilia, Alzheimer's, Long COVID and many others. We represent people whose health conditions and whose loved ones with serious health conditions have a special interest in ensuring that people with pre-existing conditions can keep themselves safe as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. We came together earlier this year to advocate for a national paid family and medical leave program and we remain committed to seeing that through in the Build Back Better reconciliation bill and beyond. We strongly believe that being able to take time off work is fundamentally an access to care issue, and our current patchwork system of paid and unpaid leave forces some patients and caregivers to choose between treating their illness and keeping their job or having enough income to survive – while also exacerbating health inequities.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, 33 million Americans lacked a single day of paid sick time they could use for themselves or to care for a sick family member. Today, the share of the workforce without access to paid sick time and extended family and medical leave remains largely unchanged. With the latest surge of the Omicron variant and the expectation of variants that will follow, it is essential that we move quickly and ensure that anyone who needs to stay home from work because they or their family member is ill or has been exposed to COVID-19 can do so without having to fear for their job or lost wages. This is even more critical to individuals with serious illnesses and caregivers given their heightened risk for COVID-19. Without access to paid sick time, these individuals and their caregivers cannot easily follow CDC guidance to isolate or quarantine without risking their ability to support their families or keep their jobs.

Reinstating guaranteed emergency paid sick and family caregiving leave makes sense not only in the context of the current Omicron variant, but for the duration of the pandemic. Despite significant coverage gaps, FFCRA enabled millions of Americans to access paid sick time and is estimated to have prevented more than 400 cases of COVID-19 per day per state – or more than 15,000 infections

nationwide – and if more variants indeed materialize, paid sick and family care leave for COVID could be expected to prevent even more cases.

Our organizations have long fought to ensure that patients have access to care to treat their serious illnesses and health conditions. We view paid sick time and family and medical leave as a core access to care issue and we are committed to working with you as we tackle the public health crisis confronting our nation.

Thank you for considering our requests. If you have any questions or would like to talk with our representatives, please direct your staff to contact Jennifer Hoque at the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network at Jennifer.hoque@cancer.org.

Sincerely,

AARP

Academy of Oncology Nurse & Patient Navigators

The AIDS Institute

Alliance for Aging Research

Alpha-1 Foundation

The ALS Association

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American Heart Association

The Arc of the United States

Association for Clinical Oncology

Association of Oncology Social Work

Cancer Support Community

Cervivor, Inc.

Child Neurology Foundation

COVID Survivors for Change

Epilepsy Foundation

Family Voices

Friends of Cancer Research

Hemophilia Federation of America

Livestrong

March of Dimes

The Mended Hearts, Inc.

Muscular Dystrophy Association

National Alliance for Caregiving

National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship

National Health Council

National Hemophilia Foundation

National Multiple Sclerosis Society

National Organization for Rare Disorders

National Patient Advocate Foundation

Pulmonary Hypertension Association

Susan G. Komen

Triage Cancer

UsAgainstAlzheimer's

WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women
with Heart Disease

ZERO - The End of Prostate Cancer