



The American Rescue Plan Is the Relief Wisconsin Residents Need

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The following is a statement by Kids Forward Executive Director Michele Mackey:

Kids Forward applauds the passage of the American Rescue Plan. This legislation is the kind of action we need at this moment, when unemployed workers are still struggling to pay their bills, millions of families are falling further behind on rent and at risk of facing homelessness, and parents are worrying about how they will feed their children.

This plan takes an important step towards meeting the needs of families of color in Wisconsin. Longstanding unemployment discrimination, as well as unequal opportunity in housing, health care, and education have left Black and Latinx families in Wisconsin the hardest hit by the pandemic.

Key elements of the COVID relief package that will help families stay afloat in Wisconsin include:

- Increased housing assistance and an extension of increased SNAP food benefits to help families keep their homes and afford food;
- Extended pandemic unemployment assistance;
- Financial assistance to help people meet urgent expenses, such as rent, groceries, utility bills, and car payments, delivered through expanded tax credits and stimulus payments; and
- Improved access to affordable health coverage by reducing monthly Obamacare premiums for people with low incomes, as well as middle-class families. It also includes a substantial new incentive for holdout states like Wisconsin to expand Medicaid.

The package includes much-needed state and local government fiscal relief to keep our communities going. These funds will help Wisconsin and localities restore jobs for teachers, firefighters, and other critical public employees, prevent further layoffs and cuts to core services like education and health care, and provide assistance to people who have been hit hardest by the pandemic and recession. In addition, there are dedicated funds to support schools that can be used to pay for the cost of distance learning, safe in-person instruction, caring for the physical and mental health of returning students, and most importantly, aid with learning loss students have suffered.

Overall, the American Rescue Plan provides critical but temporary relief. As we approach the one-year mark of the COVID-19 public health and economic crisis, it has become increasingly clear that economic recovery isn't going to happen overnight, particularly for people of color, who have waited longest in past



recessions to see the gains from a rebounding job market. We have more work to do to build a more equitable economy that works for everyone.