



Thomas M. Conway
International President

February 25, 2021

Via Email

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: United Steelworkers supports the passage of H.R. 1319, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 850,000 members of the United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union (USW), I write in strong support of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

The effort to contain COVID-19 requires bold action to ensure economic recovery along with reductions in infection rates. The American Rescue Plan recognizes both needs, ensuring that Americans in every part of the country will see relief. This starts with direct aid to workers. Direct payments for individuals and working families— the COVID-19 pandemic has hit working people’s wallets, and this bill will provide a \$1,400 direct payment for those that need the assistance the most.

As Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell has indicated, the real unemployment rate is hovering around 10 percent. The need for unemployed workers to feed their families, pay their bills, and stay in their homes is great and that is why the USW supports the extension of Unemployment Insurance included in H.R. 1319. Workers who have been laid off have extended UI benefits for up to 48 weeks with an increase in minimum weekly federal benefit from \$300 to \$400.

The legislation also extends COBRA coverage for uninsured workers— providing a much-needed 85 percent federal subsidy for COBRA coverage for workers who were laid off or saw a reduction of hours. The provision allows for individuals who were previously displaced an opportunity to enroll.

The legislation recognizes that the COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated critical and declining plans, and treats pensioners income with the same care that has been provided to businesses both large and small by including the Butch Lewis Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act of 2021. By shoring up critical and declining status pension plans millions of retirees will be assured of a continued secure retirement without

forcing cuts to retiree benefits. In addition, employers facing difficult pension burdens will also be able to focus on job creation and future investment, propelling us past this COVID-19 crisis.

Recognizing the risks that the workers bringing goods on shore or building our Navy's aircraft carriers experience, the legislation also improves the Longshore and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act building in a presumption that COVID-19 is work-related and authorizes eligibility for medical benefits, lost wages, and survivor benefits. USW members at Local 8888 put their lives at risk building and maintaining the platforms, which extend America's influence across the globe. It is the right thing to do.

Reducing COVID-19 infections requires investments, and the \$14 billion to speed up the distribution and administration of COVID-19 vaccines across the country is welcome. Combined with \$46 billion in a national testing strategy, funding for rapid tests, community-based testing sites, and expanding lab capacity, a scientific and thoughtful effort to contain the virus is the right policy.

Finally, ensuring that the next generation will succeed requires investment in our education system. The \$130 billion to help schools take the steps recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to ensure students and educators can return to the classroom safely is welcome.

For all these reasons, USW strongly supports the passage of H.R. 1319, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

Sincerely,


Thomas Conway
International President