

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor
Office of Governor Ron DeSantis
400 S. Monroe Street.
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis:

As Members of Congress we write to urge you to act immediately so Florida can access emergency COVID-19 federal resources. As small businesses and families work to prevent community spread of the virus, the government must work together to ensure our communities have the resources they need as economic activity slows down and individuals go without paychecks.

The \$8.3 billion appropriations supplemental that became law on March 6, 2020, directs the SBA to make low-interest loans to small businesses and non-profit organizations that have suffered economic injury as a result of COVID-19. We urge you to swiftly provide guidance on how small businesses in Florida can access these funds.

In addition, on March 14, 2020, the House of Representatives passed the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act*. This legislation guarantees free COVID-19 testing, establishes paid leave, expands food security initiatives, increases federal Medicaid funding, and importantly, enhances Unemployment Insurance. The Senate is expected to pass this relief package, and President Trump will hopefully sign it this week.

Florida laws and regulations impede access to these expanded Unemployment Insurance benefits. Specifically, Florida law requires individuals to meet stringent job search requirements and continuously demonstrate that they are able and actively searching for work. Florida also requires that individuals wait a period of one week where no benefits are paid. Florida cannot access these benefits until these requirements are waived so it is critical that you take immediate action to ensure Floridians can receive these dollars.

Additionally, we note that Florida provides only twelve weeks of unemployment insurance and caps the benefit at \$275 per week (among the lowest in the country). Given the likely severity of lost wages as a result of this pandemic, we strongly encourage you to take whatever action is necessary to increase the amount and duration of unemployment payments.

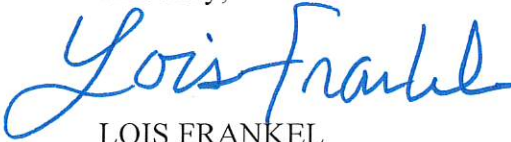
In summation, we ask you to:

- Submit a formal request for disaster assistance to the Trump Administration to ensure Florida is eligible for emergency federal resources.
- Provide guidance to small businesses on how to access emergency loans from the SBA.

- Modify unemployment benefit requirements to ensure Florida residents will be eligible for emergency COVID-19 unemployment payments, to include:
 - Waiver of work and job search requirements and the mandatory waiting period during the outbreak;
 - Increase the length of time workers are eligible for unemployment during the outbreak to 26 weeks;
 - Issue COVID-19 specific guidance for accessing state unemployment insurance benefits that provides the greatest flexibility possible.
 - Increase the maximum payouts to ensure sufficient coverage;
 - Call the Florida State Legislature into session to take action on any of the above items that require their approval.

Our offices are ready to assist with the COVID-19 response in any way necessary.

Sincerely,



LOIS FRANKEL
Member of Congress

KATHY CASTOR
Member of Congress

CHARLIE CRIST
Member of Congress

TED DEUTCH
Member of Congress

VAL DEMINGS
Member of Congress

MARIO DIAZ-BALART
Member of Congress

ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress

AL LAWSON, JR.
Member of Congress

DEBBIE MUCARSEL-POWELL
Member of Congress

STEPHANIE MURPHY
Member of Congress

DONNA E. SHALALA
Member of Congress

DARREN SOTO
Member of Congress

DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ
Member of Congress

FREDERICA WILSON
Member of Congress

CC: Florida Cabinet