

### U.S. HOUSE PASSES CORONAVIRUS RELIEF BILL

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The House passed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act on March 14, 2020, in an effort to cushion the blow of the coronavirus outbreak. The Senate is likely to pass the bill or offer modifications this week. Below is a short summary of this 110 page bill.

**TESTING:** Funds would be allocated for free testing for the uninsured, veterans, Medicaid recipients, patients of the military and Native American health systems. It also requires private health insurers to provide free testing (including the cost of a visit to get tested).

**PAID SICK LEAVE:** Employers with less than 500 employees would need to provide two weeks (80 hours) of paid sick leave for full-time employees who become infected with the coronavirus, are quarantined with a suspected infection, are needed to care for family members who have been diagnosed or are experiencing symptoms, to obtain a medical diagnosis if experiencing symptoms, or to care for a child if school or child care has been closed due to coronavirus. Part-time employees are entitled to a pro-rata amount of paid leave.

**FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE:** Expanded FMLA would be provided to employees of employers with less than 500 employees who have received a quarantine recommendation from a health care practitioner, are experiencing symptoms of coronavirus, are needed to care for a family member who has been diagnosed or are experiencing symptoms, or to care for a child if the school or child care provider has been closed. Employees who have been employed for at least 30 days are eligible. The first 14 days of leave is unpaid, but the employee would have the choice to use other accrued paid leave to cover the absence. This leave also works in conjunction with the paid sick leave provision, so employers with less than 500 employees would not need to provide paid leave for the first 14 days. After the first 14 days, employers must compensate employees in an amount that is not less than two-thirds of the employee's regular rate of pay. Employers who have less than 50 employees can apply to the Secretary of Labor for an exemption if they can show an economic hardship.

**FOOD AID:** The legislation strengthens food security initiatives by providing \$1.15 billion to food banks and to expand food aid for seniors and low-income pregnant women and mothers. The bill would also suspend new work requirements for recipients, which is currently necessary to receive federal food assistance.

**UNEMPLOYMENT:** The bill provides \$1 billion in grant funding to assist states in paying unemployment benefits insurance to affected individuals. Some employers may be eligible for tax credits to ease the economic impact on their insurance rates.

This is a very fluid situation. Thus, stay tuned. Bodman will provide further updates once additional legislation is passed.

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