Business Roundtable

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February 23, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leaders:

On behalf of the CEO members of Business Roundtable, we write to support the swift enactment of additional COVID-19 rescue legislation to strengthen the nation's public health response and provide targeted assistance to struggling individuals and small businesses. As Congress negotiates the legislation, we believe the package should prioritize measures to strengthen the public health response and address short-term, emergency needs. We urge Congress and the Biden Administration to work on a bipartisan basis to protect vulnerable Americans, vaccinate communities and accelerate the national economic recovery.

Defeat the pandemic by strengthening the public health response

The most urgent rescue priority is the allocation of resources to help mobilize and scale up a national vaccination program, particularly for underserved populations and communities of color. The package should also provide resources to help identify and defeat new viral strains, expand testing capacity and invest in the public health workforce.

Provide emergency economic assistance for individuals and small businesses

Another pressing priority is for Congress to provide emergency funds for the individuals, families and businesses hardest hit by the economic downturn, especially with unemployment benefits set to expire in the coming weeks. The COVID-19 rescue package should include targeted assistance for individuals as well as for small businesses that are struggling to stay afloat. Additionally, support is needed for the safe and timely reopening of schools and to bridge the digital divide.

Focus on "rescue" now, "recovery" next

Looking ahead, we also believe it will be necessary for Congress and the Administration to advance a bipartisan "recovery" package designed to promote a stronger and more durable economy over the long term. We view a recovery package as a significant opportunity for major investment in infrastructure, as well as measures to strengthen job training.

Business Roundtable continues to support an increase in the federal minimum wage. However, we believe that the increase should be thoughtfully designed to reflect regional differences in wage rates and not undermine small business recovery. In the context of a major recession involving millions of small business job losses, this will require an appropriate phase-in and, potentially, triggers tied to the end of the pandemic. We believe these issues would be better debated in future legislation so as not to delay urgent resources for the public health response and economic recovery.

From the early days of the pandemic, Business Roundtable member companies have been at the forefront of the response. Now, our members are working to advance vaccination development, distribution and administration, while educating their employees on the importance of vaccines and other safety measures. We are eager to do more to help preserve public health and usher in a strong economic recovery.

Sincerely,

Joshua Bolten

Joshua Bolten
President & CEO
Business Roundtable