



National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

NACCHO Policy Alert: Congress Passes COVID-19 Relief Deal

On December 28, the President signed into law another COVID-19 relief package after eight months of negotiations and failed packages. The bill was passed as part of a larger end-of-year deal that also included [omnibus FY21 appropriations](#) legislation to fully fund the government through the end of the fiscal year in September 2021. NACCHO has [advocated](#) for months for robust funding to help local health departments continue to respond to the pandemic and protect their communities.

Some in Congress have described the \$900 billion package as a “down payment” for a few months until another deal can be negotiated after the Biden-Harris administration and new Congress take office in January, however it is still unclear when another deal might materialize. NACCHO will continue pushing for additional support for local health departments in any future package. If you have any questions, please contact Government Affairs Senior Specialist Ian Goldstein at igoldstein@naccho.org.

The \$900 billion package includes the following key provisions:

Public Health Response

- \$22.4 billion for testing, contact tracing, and COVID-19 mitigation programs for state, local, territorial, and tribal health departments, \$2.5 billion of which is for grants targeted at underserved areas, including communities of color and rural communities. We do not expect new jurisdictions to be added to the directly funded list, nor is a certain amount of the funds designated specifically for local health departments to ensure more equal access to funds across local health departments.
 - Money must be released from the federal government within 21 days of enactment.
 - Directly funded entities will need to update their testing plans within 60 days of receiving funds.
 - Directly funded entities are required to report on the use of funds “detailing current commitments and obligations broken out by the coronavirus supplemental appropriations Act that provided the source of funds.” The Secretary of Health and Human Services will make the information publicly available. This public tracking was advocated for by NACCHO to help map the flow of federal funds to the local level.
- \$8.75 billion to support federal, state, local, territorial and tribal public health agencies to distribute, administer, monitor, and track coronavirus vaccination to ensure broad-based distribution, access, and vaccine coverage.
 - \$4.5 billion for State, local, Territorial, and Tribal Public Health Departments, \$1 billion of which needs to be sent out within 21 days of enactment.
 - \$300 million for a targeted effort to distribute and administer vaccines to high-risk and underserved populations, including racial and ethnic minority populations and rural communities.
 - Requires that CDC develop a comprehensive coronavirus vaccine distribution strategy and spend plan, including how existing infrastructure will be leveraged, enhancements or new infrastructure that may be built, considerations for moving and storing vaccines, guidance for how governmental public health entities should prepare for, store, and

administer vaccines, nationwide vaccination targets, funding that will be distributed to States, localities, and territories, how an informational campaign to inform both the public and health care providers will be executed, and how the strategy and plan will focus efforts on high-risk and underserved populations, including racial and ethnic minority populations.

- An additional \$75 million total for a Public Awareness Campaign “on the importance of vaccinations to carry out a national, evidence-based campaign to increase awareness and knowledge of the safety and effectiveness of vaccines for the prevention and control of diseases, combat misinformation about vaccines, and disseminate scientific and evidence-based vaccine-related information, with the goal of increasing rates of vaccination across all ages, as applicable, particularly in communities with low rates of vaccination, to reduce and eliminate vaccine-preventable diseases.” Authorizes \$15 million per year for five years.

State and Local Funds

The previous round of funds provided to states and localities by the Coronavirus Relief Fund in the CARES Act, set to expire at the end of this month, were extended until December 31, 2021. In many localities, this funding has helped support the local health department response and it is unclear how much has not yet been spent given the deadline was only 10 days away.

Related Policies

Housing —\$25 billion in federal rental assistance, with \$800 million set aside for Native American housing entities. A federal eviction ban, which CDC had enacted through the end of the year, has been extended through the end of January.

Schools and childcare — \$82 billion for colleges and universities including \$4 billion for a governors’ relief fund, more than \$54 billion for public K-12 schools, and nearly \$23 billion for a higher education fund. Separately, the childcare sector will receive about \$10 billion

Food and farmer assistance —\$13 billion to bolster food stamp benefits by 15 percent, although it doesn’t expand SNAP eligibility. Farmers and ranchers receive another \$13 billion round of direct payments to help cover pandemic-induced losses.

Economic Relief

\$166 billion in direct checks — Individuals making up to \$75,000 a year will receive \$600, while couples making up to \$150,000 will receive \$1,200, and \$600 per child. The deal also makes the stimulus checks more accessible to immigrant families.

\$120 billion in extra unemployment help through March 14. The legislation also extends employment benefits to self-employed individuals, gig workers, and those who’ve exhausted their state benefits.

\$325 billion for small business, including \$284 billion in loans through the Paycheck Protection Program, \$20 billion for businesses in low-income communities, and \$15 billion for live venues, movie theaters and museums.

\$45 billion in transportation aid — \$15 billion for airlines, \$14 billion for mass transit, \$10 billion for state highways, \$2 billion for airports and \$1 billion for Amtrak.

The package extends a payroll tax subsidy for employers offering workers paid sick leave and boosts the Earned Income Tax Credit. Congress did not extend the paid leave. Employers are no longer required to provide paid sick leave to those who get infected with COVID-19; however, the bill does extend a refundable tax credit that fully subsidizes the cost to businesses of paying out sick leave until the end of March.

For additional highlights including, omnibus bill text, explanatory statement and health-related funding highlights:

- [FY2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act Text](#)
- [COVID Relief Package Summary](#)
- [Division-by-division Summary \(LHHS is Division H\)](#)
- [Division H Explanatory Statement \(LHHS\)](#)