

# ACTION SHEET

## Media Action: Poverty in a pandemic

We are now in May, which means two months of rent due that millions cannot pay because of unemployment or a reduction in pay in the pandemic. Without intervention, we are looking at a devastating expansion of America's housing crisis.

The next COVID-19 bill must include resources to help keep people housed during this economic crisis. Specifically, allocating **at least \$100 billion in federal money for emergency rental assistance and enacting a national moratorium on evictions** until the crisis passes.

In addition, Congress must expand SNAP as part of the COVID-19 response. Responding to economic crisis is part of SNAP's design. Yet, while tens of millions of Americans struggle to buy food, Congress has done little to utilize SNAP as a tool for relief. RESULTS is asking Congress to **increase SNAP's maximum benefit by 15 percent** until the economic crisis passes.

Finally, we must look beyond COVID-19 at the underlying housing crisis in America that was there before the outbreak. Creating a **refundable "renters' tax credit" for low-income renters** would help millions of low-income renters not earning enough to afford a place to live. Paired with measures to increase the supply of affordable housing and reduce evictions. A renters' credit would help low-income renters find stable housing in good times and bad.

While Congress is in Washington, local media urging lawmakers to act are a powerful way to push them into action. Use the sample letters on the next page to get started on your own letters to the editor urging Congress to prioritize housing and feeding families during this crisis and beyond.

## Leverage media to push lawmakers into action

Getting your letter to the editor is just one step in influencing lawmakers about housing and hunger. You then want to [leverage that media to its maximum effect](#). Here are actions to take in doing so:

1. Always send your published media pieces to the appropriate aides in your House and Senate offices, with a reiteration of your most recent request on the issue. Contact RESULTS staff if you need help identifying who the key Congressional staff are.
2. Share your published media with your group, your local action network, and social media urging others to amplify with congressional offices and also write letters in response.
3. Share all your recently published media with your members of Congress and/or congressional aides in your next lobby meeting.

# Sample Letters to the Editor

## Housing and COVID-19: Emergency rental assistance

*A home is the best way to keep people healthy from COVID-19. But the safety of having a home is under threat for millions of Americans.*

*COVID-19 has created levels of unemployment not seen in the U.S. in decades. When people cannot work, they cannot pay the rent. Even with some getting unemployment insurance, millions are still falling behind, putting low-income renters under the threat of eviction and homelessness. It is unconscionable that Americans forced to stay home because of the virus are now in danger of losing those homes. Emergency rental assistance and stopping evictions will help renters stay housed and safe until this crisis passes.*

*Homelessness and eviction do not have to be the legacies of COVID-19. I urge our members of Congress quickly pass legislation that includes at least \$100 billion for emergency rental assistance and a national moratorium on evictions.*

## Hunger and COVID-19: Increasing SNAP benefits

*COVID-19 is quickly adding hunger to its list of health risks. With more than 30 million Americans unemployed, people are being forced to choose between rent and groceries. Meanwhile, food banks are overwhelmed, and missed school meals are threatening the nutritional health of our children.*

*The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) is our nation's first line of defense against hunger. And it is built for crises just like this. Back in 2008, SNAP not only kept food on the table for millions, it helped the economy recover (every \$1 in new SNAP spending creates \$1.50-1.80 in economic activity). It is ready to do so again, but Congress must act.*

*I urge our members of Congress to help hungry Americans by quickly passing legislation that increases the maximum SNAP benefit by 15 percent until this economic crisis ends.*

## Housing beyond COVID-19: Renters' tax credit

*America was in a housing crisis before coronavirus hit. Now, the current economic crisis has laid bare a fact that has been too long ignored – millions of American renters are just one paycheck away from losing their home. In addition to providing emergency assistance to help renters get through this crisis, we also need long-term measures that prioritize low-income renters.*

*Looking ahead, a refundable renter's tax credit could make a significant difference. Low-income renters would receive a monthly tax refund to help cover rent over 30 percent of their household income (capped at HUD's local fair market rent). Paired with measures to increase the supply of affordable housing and reduce evictions, a renters' credit could ensure that in good times and bad, people still have a place to live.*

*Once the immediate public health crisis passes, I urge our members of Congress to swiftly enact a refundable renters' tax credit so that low-income Americans have a safe and affordable place to live.*