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March 17, 2020

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor
Commonwealth of Virginia
Capitol Square
Richmond, VA 23291

Dear Governor Northam,

Thank you for all you and your staff are doing in this moment of crisis. We are lucky to have a doctor in charge who understands the seriousness of the coronavirus.

The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy and people of faith from across the Commonwealth applaud you for acting quickly to expand unemployment insurance, provide assistance to businesses, stop utilities from disconnecting service and much more. Additionally, we're heartened that children across the Commonwealth continue to have access to meals in their community and we look forward to continued progress on that front.

Due to this unprecedented global pandemic, we know you are working overtime to find new ways to help the residents of the Commonwealth. Below are some additional suggestions we urge you to consider via emergency regulation:

Require Paid Sick Days

- Require all businesses to provide regular pay to all workers that need to quarantine or practice social distancing for 14 days (and set up additional assistance programs for businesses). This is critical for public health as our vital supply chain needs to remain virus free. Restaurant workers are particularly able to spread the virus given that 81 percent of them have no paid sick days.

Additional Time-off Protections

- Protect all workers from being fired for taking unpaid time off caused by this pandemic.

Expand Unemployment Insurance

- Allow independent contractors/gig workers access to unemployment insurance to compensate for lost revenue during the pandemic.
- Ensure that anyone who has a long-term illness due to COVID-19 or who is caring for someone who has a long-term illness due to COVID-19 has access to paid family and medical leave coverage through the unemployment system.

Guarantee Health Access

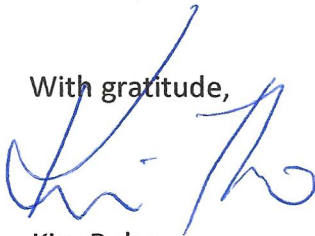
- Ensure that everyone in Virginia has access to healthcare that includes coverage for COVID-19.

Expand the Social Safety Net

- Increase access to TANF and SNAP by broadening eligibility, expediting access, and lowering administrative burden.

Please know you are in our prayers. Let us know if there are other ways we may assist you and your team.

With gratitude,



Kim Bobo
Executive Director
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy

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The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy advocates economic, racial, social, and environmental justice in Virginia's policies and practices through education, prayer, and action. VICPP is a non-partisan coalition of more than 750 faith communities working for a more just society.