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## Fact Sheet on House's Reconciliation Package & the Biden Administration's COVID-19 American Rescue Plan COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & COMMERCE

The Fiscal Year 2021 Reconciliation Act puts into action the policies and budgetary requests outlined by the Biden Administration's [American Rescue Plan](#).

### VACCINES:

The American Rescue Plan calls for the establishment of a national vaccination program, and this legislation provides critical funding and resources to increase COVID-19 vaccinations across the country.

- Many states [have struggled](#) to distribute vaccines after the Trump Administration chose to defer almost entirely to the states to distribute and administer all vaccines.
- The American Rescue Plan requests **\$20 billion** for improving COVID-19 vaccine administration and distribution, including vaccination clinics and mobile vaccination units, a vaccine awareness campaign, and increasing the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) to Medicaid-covered recipients of a vaccine. It also requests over **\$5 billion** for research, development, and manufacturing of vaccines, therapeutics, and ancillary supplies.
- **Specifically, the Fiscal Year 2021 Reconciliation Act provides:**
  - **\$7.5 billion** for Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to prepare, promote, distribute, administer, monitor, and track COVID-19 vaccines. This includes distribution and administration, support for state, local, tribal, and territorial public health departments, community vaccination centers, IT enhancements, facility enhancements, and public communication;
  - **\$600 million** to be directed to the Indian Health Service (IHS) for vaccine-related activities;
  - **\$5.2 billion** to the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) to support advanced research, development, manufacturing, production, and purchase of vaccines, therapeutics, and ancillary medical products for COVID-19;
  - **\$1 billion** for the CDC to undertake a vaccine awareness and engagement campaign;
  - **\$500 million** for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to support the review, facilitate the development of, and post-marketing surveillance of COVID-19 vaccines and therapeutics and address drug shortages, among other activities; and
  - Medicaid coverage of COVID-19 vaccines, including the option for states to provide coverage to the uninsured, without cost sharing at 100 percent FMAP for the duration of the public health emergency.

### TESTING:

The American Rescue Plan proposes scaling up testing in order to stop the spread of COVID-19, safely reopen schools, and protect at-risk populations. A robust testing program remains a critical tool in the

**fight against this virus in conjunction with vaccinations. This legislation provides the funding and resources to do just that.**

- Despite innovations and adaptations in the testing space, COVID-19 tests are still not widely accessible, and supplies continue to be in shortage.
- According to a Government Accountability Office (GAO) [report from November 2020](#), a national survey to states and territories found that 21 states reported shortages of testing reagents, 16 states reported shortages of testing instruments, and 24 states reported shortages of rapid point-of-care tests in the 30 days prior to the report's release, and those same states predicted shortages would continue through the winter months.
- The American Rescue Plan requests **\$50 billion** for testing related resources and activities, including procurement and administration of regular screening tests, and investments in United States laboratory capacity for diagnostic and screening tests.
- **The Fiscal Year 2021 Reconciliation Act provides:**
  - **\$46 billion** for testing, contact tracing, and mitigation. These activities include: implementing a national strategy for testing, contact tracing, surveillance, and mitigation; providing technical assistance, guidance, support, and grants or contracts to States; manufacturing, procurement, distribution, administration of tests, including personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies necessary for administration; and establishing and expanding federal, State, or local testing and contact tracing capabilities, including investments in laboratory capacity, community-based testing sites, and mobile testing units;
  - **\$1.5 billion** for IHS testing, tracing, and mitigation needs;
  - **\$1.75 billion** for genomic sequencing and surveillance of the circulating strains of COVID-19. There are currently [multiple strains of COVID-19 circling the globe](#), some of which have recently [emerged in the United States](#); and
  - **\$500 million** to allow CDC to establish, expand, and maintain data surveillance and analytics, including to modernize the United States' disease warning system to forecast and track hotspots for COVID-19.

**PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE:**

**The American Rescue Plan calls for the mobilization of a public health jobs program to support the COVID-19 response.**

- **The Fiscal Year 2021 Reconciliation Act provides:**
  - **\$7.6 billion** in funding to public health departments to hire 100,000 full time employees into the public health workforce. These positions would include contact tracers, social support specialists, community health workers, public health nurses, epidemiologists, lab personnel, and communications. Funds would also support PPE, technology, data management, supplies, and reporting;
  - **\$240 million** for IHS public health workforce needs; and

- **\$100 million** to support the Medical Reserve Corps, which consists of a network of volunteer medical and public health professionals that support emergency response efforts and community health activities.

### **HEALTH DISPARITIES:**

**The American Rescue Plan includes funding to provide health services to the underserved and addressing ongoing health disparities.**

- COVID-19 has [laid bare](#) the harsh realities of health disparities in the United States. For instance, Black and Hispanic Americans are [getting vaccinated at significantly lower rates](#) than White Americans, a trend that advocates blame on the federal government's failure to prioritize equitable distribution. Communities of color are [also experiencing higher rates of COVID-19 cases, and higher hospitalization and death rates as a result](#).
- **The Fiscal Year 2021 Reconciliation Act provides a total of \$25.2 billion** for addressing health disparities and protecting vulnerable populations, including:
  - **\$250 million** for nursing home strike teams to help facilities manage COVID-19 outbreaks when they occur;
  - **\$7.6 billion** in funding to support COVID-19 response at Community Health Centers;
  - **\$1.8 billion** to support the purchase, procurement, or distribution of COVID-19 test and testing supplies, PPE, and vaccines for staff and individuals in congregate settings. This would include support to states, localities, territories, and tribes for strategies and activities to detect, diagnose, trace or monitor COVID-19 in congregate settings, including prisons, jails, detention centers, long-term care facilities, psychiatric hospitals and residential treatment facilities, intermediate care facilities, and other settings providing care for individuals with disabilities;
  - **\$3.3 billion** to IHS in flexible funding to support lost third-party revenue, information technology infrastructure for telehealth and electronic health records, urban Indian organizations, and other health services and costs;
  - **\$800 million** to the National Health Service Corps to support primary health care clinicians in high-need areas;
  - **\$331 million** for Teaching Health Centers to expand the number of sites nationwide, increase resident allocations, and provide administrative support for expanding the program;
  - **\$240 million** to support the Nurse Corps Loan Repayment program, which helps support nurses working in critical shortage and underserved areas;
  - A Medicaid state option to allow states to cover postpartum women for 12 months after birth, to help address the maternal mortality crisis disproportionately affecting women of color; and
  - Medicaid coverage for incarcerated individuals 30 days prior to their release, to ensure continuity of care for justice-connected individuals.

### **MENTAL HEALTH:**

**The American Rescue Plan proposes scaling up mental health services, including to expand access to behavioral and mental health prevention and treatment.**

- **The Fiscal Year 2021 Reconciliation Act provides a total of \$4 billion** for behavioral and mental health services, including:
  - **\$3.5 billion** for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency (SAMHSA) to be split between the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Community Mental Health block grant programs. Both programs provide funding to all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, and six Pacific jurisdictions. The Substance Abuse block grant program also supports one tribal entity, the Chippewa Tribe;
  - **\$420 million** will be made available to IHS for mental and behavioral health prevention and treatment services;
  - **\$100 million** to the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Program within the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to expand access to behavioral health services by focusing on training behavioral health paraprofessionals, such as peer support specialists;
  - **\$140 million** to develop a program for mental and behavioral health and to prevent burnout among health care providers and public safety officers, including training and outreach;
  - **\$80 million** to provide support for mental health and substance use disorder services at community-based entities and behavioral health organizations;
  - **\$10 million** to support the National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network, which works to develop and promote effective community practices for children and adolescents exposed to a wide array of traumatic events; and
  - **\$50 million** to Suicide Prevention and Project Aware programs at SAMHSA, which support youth mental health services and suicide prevention efforts.

**HEALTH COVERAGE:**

**The American Rescue Plan commits to preserving and expanding access to health care coverage during the pandemic.**

- Between March and September of 2020, [roughly 2 to 3 million](#) people lost employer sponsored health insurance.
- Prior to that, [30 million people](#) already lacked coverage, barring them from accessing the health care system from the outset of the pandemic.
- **The Fiscal Year 2021 Reconciliation Act provides a number of complementary provisions to make coverage more affordable and accessible to millions of Americans by:**
  - Expanding Affordable Care Act (ACA) Marketplace premium tax credits to more middle-class Americans for 2021 and 2022, including those with incomes above 400 percent of the federal poverty line (FPL).
  - Allowing individuals receiving unemployment compensation during the public health emergency to access ACA premium tax credits regardless of income.

- Providing a new incentive for states to expand Medicaid by temporarily increasing the federal medical assistance percentage by five percentage points. If all 12 remaining states expanded Medicaid, more than two million people currently in the coverage gap would gain access to Medicaid.
- Ensuring that workers can continue to afford their employer health care by providing partial COBRA subsidies. COBRA allows workers who experience layoffs or reduction in hours to continue with their job-based health coverage for a limited period of time to avoid a disruption in care.

**CONSUMER ENERGY AND WATER ASSISTANCE:**

**The American Rescue Plan helps Americans who are struggling to make ends meet keep the lights on, the heat working and the water running by proposing \$5 billion in assistance.**

- Energy access is crucial to residential health and to sustaining socially-distanced and remote work lifestyles.
- Unpaid electric and natural gas bills were expected to reach \$32 billion by the end of 2020, with an estimated 20 percent of residential customers at least 60 days behind on their bills. A projected five million additional households are eligible for energy assistance due to pandemic-related job losses.
- Households in California and Virginia, two states that are tracking water debt, are facing more than \$1 billion and more than \$88 million, respectively, in unpaid water bills. These debts threaten the long-term viability of municipal water utilities and raise the risk of interruptions in water service, which is essential to maintain hygiene during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **The Fiscal Year 2021 Reconciliation Act provides \$5 billion to those most in need to pay their utility bills at a time when so many Americans are spending unprecedented amounts of time at home, including:**
  - **\$4.5 billion** to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for home energy assistance through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); and
  - **\$500 million** in additional funds for HHS for the Low-Income Household Drinking Water and Wastewater Emergency Assistance Program established by Congress at the end of 2020. This brings the total amount of money available to assist families with their water and sewer bills to over \$1.1 billion.

**POLLUTION AND THE PANDEMIC:**

**The Fiscal Year 2021 Reconciliation Act helps address health outcome disparities from pollution and the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

- Recent work by GAO found that our national air monitoring network infrastructure is aging and needs to be modernized to identify localized pollution that threatens environmental justice communities.
- **The Fiscal Year 2021 Reconciliation Act provides the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with \$100 million to address health outcome disparities from pollution and the COVID-19 pandemic:**
  - **\$50 million** to EPA for environmental justice grants and activities to help communities facing a disproportionate burden of pollution and disease; and

- **\$50 million** to EPA for air quality monitoring grants and other purposes.

**REMOTE LEARNING:**

**The American Rescue Plan will help bridge the digital divide for students and teachers without home internet access.**

- To keep communities safe and prevent further spread of COVID-19, schools need the flexibility to engage in remote learning when necessary for public health and safety.
- Studies estimate that as many as 12 million students still lack internet service at their homes, with minorities and those in rural areas most often among the unconnected. Without a reliable internet connection to log into classes, submit work, and engage with teachers and other students, these students have fallen even further behind in school.
- **The Fiscal Year 2021 Reconciliation Act provides \$7.6 billion to expand internet connectivity to students and communities by:**
  - Reimbursing schools and libraries—central points for connectivity in many communities—to purchase equipment such as hotspots, internet service, and computers on behalf of students and patrons; and
  - Ensuring schools and libraries can quickly access this critical funding by relying upon the Federal Communications Commission and its E-rate program to administer the funds.

**CONSUMER PROTECTION:**

**The Fiscal Year 2021 Reconciliation Act will make Americans safer in their homes by reducing the number of unsafe imported consumer products.**

- More than \$174 billion spent by consumers online can be attributed to COVID-19-related boosts in online shopping with online spending jumping 44 percent in 2020 compared with 2019.
- The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has not been able to keep pace with changing consumer trends brought on by the pandemic, including the substantial shift to online shopping and the influx of e-commerce shipments from foreign countries. The CPSC does not have enough funding to adequately staff United States ports of entry, leaving already struggling families vulnerable to risk of injury or death from uninspected consumer products, especially in-demand COVID-19 products.
- **The Fiscal Year 2021 Reconciliation Act provides \$50 million for the CPSC to ensure the safety of consumer products entering our country and into people’s homes — an essential priority during the COVID-19 pandemic.**