



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TCI Stands with our Communities and People in Virginia Most at Risk During COVID-19 Pandemic

As people across Virginia are increasingly impacted by the spread of COVID-19, the illness caused by the novel coronavirus, our hearts are with those who have been impacted by this illness, those who have been on the front lines in response, and those who have worked tirelessly to help make sure communities have basic necessities and clean facilities. During this time, The Commonwealth Institute remains focused on advancing policies that improve the well-being of communities across the state and, in particular, individuals and families who are most at risk in these times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted our global connection and our responsibility to each other, as people around the world change daily routines to safeguard public health. While it is elderly people and those with underlying health conditions who are most vulnerable to serious complications from COVID-19, the economic impact of social distancing measures in the United States will be most felt by communities of color, immigrant communities, communities with low incomes, and everyone who lacks job security, lacks access to paid leave, and lacks the resources needed to stay afloat during periods of turmoil. After all, the financial and physical health of our families and communities are still very much shaped by where we live, learn, work and play.

In the U.S., where state and local leaders are driving the response to the pandemic, it has highlighted the importance of Virginia's policy choices, including in the most recent legislative session. Over the past few years, Virginia has made important strides to advance equity in health care -- by expanding Medicaid in 2018 and taking action during the 2020 legislative session to remove barriers to Medicaid for legal permanent residents, remove the threat of work reporting requirements, and improve access to postpartum care. More action is needed by federal and state leaders to ensure people have access to paid leave, particularly in the coming weeks and months when individuals must take the necessary precautions to take care of oneself or a family member, or follow public health policies in order to combat the spread of COVID-19. State leaders should consider how to build upon this progress to promote the health and well-being of all residents.

While health care has rightfully been a primary topic of discussion, and the disruption of school schedules has renewed attention to the many roles that schools play in our communities, the impact of this global pandemic on the financial security of families across the commonwealth remains critically important. The actions taken so far by Virginia policymakers will help to lessen

the financial harm that working people across the state will experience in the short term. Additional emergency steps should be taken by federal, state, and local leaders to remove barriers to much-needed financial assistance for the most impacted businesses and families who have seen their incomes vanish. The Commonwealth Institute will be lifting up these policy options. State leaders must also stand firmly by decisions that were made during the recent General Assembly session, including raising the minimum wage -- which will strengthen Virginia's families, communities, and the economy as a whole.

We are in this together. And that will continue to be true even after the pandemic has been contained and the immediate crisis has waned. With staff working remotely, TCI will continue our work and our advocacy with state leaders, partners, and community organizations to advance policy solutions that improve the health, well-being and opportunity of individuals and communities across Virginia.

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About The Commonwealth Institute

The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis provides credible, independent, and accessible information and analyses of fiscal and economic issues with particular attention to the impacts on low- and moderate-income persons. Our products inform fiscal and budget policy debates and contribute to sound decisions that improve the well-being of individuals, communities, and Virginia as a whole. Visit www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org for more information.

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