



Congresswoman  
**VERONICA ESCOBAR**  
*Texas' 16th Congressional District*

March 27, 2020

## FACT SHEET

### Congresswoman Escobar Secures Inclusion of El Paso Priorities in *CARES Act*

Congresswoman Veronica Escobar (TX-16), helped secure the inclusion of critical priorities for El Paso in the third coronavirus response bill, the bipartisan H.R. 748, the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*.

The *CARES Act* secures critical provisions for El Paso workers and their families and invests \$2 trillion to help our public health systems, state and local governments, and small businesses in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. Below an overview of the secured provisions for different sectors:

## Healthcare

### Testing and PPE

- \$1.5 billion in State and Local Preparedness Grants through the CDC designated for activities like but not limited to:
  - Purchase of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
  - Laboratory testing to detect positive cases of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- \$1.5 billion in flexible funding to the CDC to support continuing efforts to contain and combat the virus, including repatriation and quarantine efforts, purchase and distribution of diagnostic test kits (including for state and local public health agencies), and support for laboratory testing and other programs.
- \$16 billion for the Strategic National Stockpile for critical medical supplies, PPE, and life-saving medicine
- \$1 billion for the Defense Production Act to allow the DoD to invest in manufacturing capabilities that are key to increasing the production rate of personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical equipment to meet the demand of healthcare workers across the nation.

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## **Treatment**

- Free coverage without cost-sharing of a preventative service or vaccine related to COVID-19 within 15 days of the preventive service or vaccine receiving a rating of “A” or “B” from the United States Preventive Services Task Force or a recommendation from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

## **Telehealth**

- Reauthorizes the Health Resources and Services Administration grant programs that promote the use of telehealth technologies for health care delivery, education, and health information services

## **Community Health Centers**

- \$1.32 billion for CHCs on the front lines of testing and treating patients for COVID-19.

## **Education**

### **Elementary School Relief**

- \$13.5 billion in formula funding for Elementary and Secondary Education directly to states, which will then distribute 90 percent of funds to local educational agencies to use for corona-virus response activities, such as planning for an coordinating during long term school closures; purchasing educational technology to support online learning for all students served by the local educational agency; and additional activities authorized by the federal elementary and secondary education laws

### **Higher Education Relief**

- \$14.25 billion in funding to institutions of higher education to pay for expenses like lost revenue, technology costs associated with a transition to distance education, and grants to students for food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and childcare.

### **Special Education Needs**

- A National Emergency Educational Waiver program has been created to allow the Secretary of Education to grant local waivers for certain program requirements like those found in the Individuals with Disabilities Act.

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## **Pell Grants**

- For students who dropped out of school as a result of COVID-19, excludes the term from counting toward lifetime Pell eligibility. Also does not require these students to return these unused Pell Grants to the Department.

## **Business**

### **TANF extended until November 2020**

#### **Small Business Programs**

- Paycheck Protection Program:
  - \$350 billion to create a program to provide small businesses and other entities with zero-fee loans of up to \$10 million.
  - Up to 8 weeks of average payroll and other costs will be forgiven if the business retains its employees and their salary levels with principal and interest payment deferred for up to a year.
- Small business Economic Injury Grants:
  - Authorizes \$10 billion in grants to small businesses for expenses like:
    - Paid sick leave
    - Payroll
    - Meeting increased production costs due to supply chain disruptions
    - Paying business obligations like debts, rent, and mortgage payments.
  - Is meant to provide an advance of \$10,000 to small businesses and nonprofits that apply for an SBA economic injury disaster loan within three days of applying for the loan.
  - The grant does not have to be repaid, even if the grantee is denied for a loan
- Self-Employed Workers, Gig workers, Independent Contractors:
  - These workers will be included in a newly created Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program.

## **Labor**

### **PPE for first responders**

- \$100 million to the Assistance to Firefighters Grants for the purchase of personal protective equipment through FEMA.
- \$850 million for the Byrne-Justice Assistance Grant Program, which would allow state and local police departments and jails to meet needs like the purchase of PPE.

## **Telework**

- Funding for telework capabilities across several agencies.

## **Nonprofit**

### **Telemedicine - \$200 M**

- Boosting investment in services and devices to facilitate telehealth, though limited to a previously requested FCC amount, and limited to FCC.

### **Basic supplies**

- Included some mentions, but only for FEMA (grants), BOP, firefighters, public health and airline related.

### **Food security - \$25 B**

- SNAP \$16 B, Child Nutrition \$9 B.

### **Mental Health**

- Extends/expands Mental Health Services Demonstration Program.
- \$425 M to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Administration Surveillance program.
- \$250 M for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic Expansion Grant program, and \$50 M for suicide prevention.

### **Shelters and homelessness - \$7 B**

- Across affordable housing, homelessness, and eviction-avoidance assistance programs

### **Limited liability for healthcare providers during COVID**

- Appears to retain the scope of existing licenses

### **Child Care Development Block Grant - \$3.5 B**

To provide childcare assistance to health care sector employees, emergency responders, sanitation workers, and other workers deemed essential during the response to the coronavirus.

### **Domestic Violence service provider funding**

- \$2 M for the National Domestic Violence Hotline as authorized by section 303(b) of the FVPSA; with services to be provided remotely.

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- \$45 M for Family Violence Prevention and Services formula grants as authorized by section 303(a) of the FVPSA (funds available without regard to normal matching requirements).

### **TRICARE Telehealth**

- No mention of telehealth explicitly, but \$1.1 M for TRICARE support generally.

### **Incentives for continued service by nursing home and high-need service providers**

- Not precisely, but investments are included in support to these organizations such as:
  - \$10 M for service coordinators and the continuation of existing congregate service grants for residents of assisted housing

## **Tourism and General Workforce**

### **Funding for workforce**

- Businesses are authorized to receive a tax credit for keeping workers on their payrolls during the pandemic. Refund amounts are up to half of their wage expenditures (\$5k per worker).
- Applies to businesses experiencing a 50% loss during the relevant quarter, relative to prior year. Businesses would pick this OR the SBA tax credit.
- Employers and self-employed individuals may defer the 6.2% wage tax used to fund social security. Note, would be paid over following two years.

### **Support for workers**

- Direct individual payments: cash payments of \$1,200 to working class Americans, with an additional \$500 payment available per child.
- Note that this is a sliding scale and individuals making over \$75 k (\$150 k married) will receive lower amounts.

### **Improvements to Unemployment Insurance**

- Extension of benefits, making an additional 13 weeks of federally funded unemployment insurance benefits immediately available.
- Expanded access to allow part-time, self-employed, and gig economy workers to access UI benefits.

### **Resources for hotel/motel and impacted industry**

- More than \$6.5 billion in Federal funding for CDBG, the Economic Development Administration, and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership to help mitigate the local

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economic crisis and rebuild impacted industries such as tourism or manufacturing supply chains.

## City, County, and State

### **State support**

- Based on population, Texas is estimated to receive \$11.2 billion to contain and treat the coronavirus and respond to the El Pasoans' needs during this public health crisis.

### **Support for small businesses**

- \$350 B in loan forgiveness grants to small businesses and non-profits to maintain existing workforce and help pay for other expenses like rent, mortgage, and utilities.
- \$10 B for SBA emergency grants of up to \$10,000 to provide immediate relief for small business operating costs.
- \$17 B for SBA to cover 6 months of payments for small businesses with existing SBA loans.

### **Infusion of money to localities for lost revenue (sales tax, toll, hotel and other streams) - \$150 B**

- \$150 B for state and local governments (\$ 8 B of this set aside for local governments particularly with the tax revenue issue in mind)
- This is reportedly still an item of discussion for the Phase IV relief package.

## Military

### **Funding to ensure they can keep soldiers quarantined without compromising quality of life.**

- Defense funds were provided at higher, more general levels with \$10.5 B overall to DoD and including:
  - \$1.5 B for the National Guard to deploy up to 20 k on-call soldiers to help state response
  - \$415 M on research and development work at the Pentagon, focused on vaccine and antiviral medicine development
  - \$3.81 B for the Defense Health Program to respond to the coronavirus
  - \$1.9 B for various service branch Operation and Maintenance accounts
  - \$1.45 B for working capital funds
  - \$1.1 B for TRICARE contracts under the Defense Health Program
  - \$1 B for procurement expenses incurred under the Defense Production Act
  - \$746.6 M for Army National Guard personnel
  - \$482.1 M for Air Force National Guard personnel

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## Trade

- \$377B for small businesses, including \$350B in loan forgiveness grants to small businesses and non-profits to maintain existing workforce and help pay for other expenses like rent, mortgage, and utilities.
- Includes \$10 billion for SBA emergency grants of up to \$10,000 to provide immediate relief for small business operating costs.
- Essential travel (like medical appointments) and trade still allowable under joint US-Mexico initiative.

## Other

- Expands Unemployment Insurance access to part-time, self-employed, and gig economy workers.
- \$150B for state and local expenditures
- \$3B in rental assistance for low-income Americans
- \$75M for the National Science Foundation to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus; includes research grants
- Prohibits Department of Defense funds from being used to build a border wall and includes a general transfer limitation on Department of Homeland Security funds (cannot be used for any other purpose).
- Includes tax relief to encourage employers to implement student loan repayment programs. This provision will exclude up to \$5,250 in qualifying student loan repayments paid by the employer on behalf of the employee from income for income tax purposes.
- \$50M for the Legal Services Corporation, which provides financial support for civil legal aid to low-income Americans. This funding can help LSC clients facing job losses, eviction, domestic violence and consumer scams resulting from the coronavirus crisis.
- Gives the Bureau of Prisons authority, during this covered emergency period, to place a prisoner in home confinement. This will allow the BOP population to decrease to ensure that social distancing recommendations are followed.
- \$400 million for states to help prepare for the 2020 elections. Coronavirus is already resulting in the postponement of some primaries and this funding can help states make voting safer for individuals. Funding can be used, for example, to increase the ability to vote by mail, expand early voting and online registration, and increase the safety of voting in-person by providing additional voting facilities and more poll-workers.

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- \$178M for DHS to ensure that front line federal employees have personal protective equipment.
- \$900M for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program
- \$10B for assistance to airports These funds will help airport operators meet ongoing needs and to manage current construction projects as operating expenses increase and revenues plummet.

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