

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 3, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James E. Clyburn
Majority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, and Majority Whip Clyburn:

We write as Chief Deputy Whips in order to convey views that we hold personally and that are shared by a broader group of our colleagues. We look forward to working with you to craft and pass a Build Back Better Act that supports children and hard-working families; combats the existential threat of climate change; helps America out-compete China; expands access to quality, affordable health care by permanently filling the Medicaid coverage gap and making permanent the enhancements Congress made to health insurance marketplace subsidies in the American Rescue Plan Act; and assists workers and small businesses, many of whom continue to struggle due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Under President Biden's leadership, we are confident that our Democratic majorities in the House and Senate, however slim, can unite to enact historic legislation that delivers immediate results for the American people.

We are grateful that, in connection with recent House action to advance the bipartisan infrastructure bill, to provide for that bill's consideration on or before September 27, and to adopt the concurrent budget resolution containing reconciliation instructions, you have pledged to produce a reconciliation bill in the House that can obtain the requisite 51 votes in the Senate and that is paid for.

Like you, we want to empower as many American families as possible. We are mindful that provisions that can pass one legislative chamber, but not the other, do not advance that goal. We want to move swiftly, but also with purpose and precision. We believe that every moment the House spends considering measures that cannot pass the Senate—whether on substantive or procedural grounds—is a moment wasted.

Also like you, we want the bill to be fiscally sound, unlike the last Republican-authored reconciliation bill, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. Even proponents of that bill acknowledge that it exploded our nation's deficits and debts and is a major reason why our nation's current fiscal situation is so alarming. Federal debt held by the public is projected to be 103 percent of gross domestic product at the end of 2021, and annual deficits are expected to average \$1.2 trillion from

2022 to 2031. For the sake of our economy, our security, and our children’s future, we must not repeat the Republicans’ act of reconciliation irresponsibility.

In a recent letter to House Democrats, Speaker Pelosi expressed the desire to write a bill that is “inclusive and reflective of the diverse viewpoints of the communities that we represent.” Therefore, we wanted to convey to you three overarching principles that the reconciliation bill—and the process through which it is created—must adhere to in order to obtain our support.

- First, before the House votes on the reconciliation bill, it is imperative that key spending and revenue provisions in the House bill be “pre-conferenced” with the Senate in order to ensure the provision in question can actually pass both the House and the Senate. We do not support a process whereby we approve a bill in the House, only to see the bill undergo significant changes in the Senate, and then have to vote on the bill again in revised form.
- Second, the provisions in the bill that increase deficits should be offset, with the possible exception of measures to combat climate change, in light of the fact that cost estimates prepared by the Congressional Budget Office and the Joint Committee on Taxation do not adequately account for the future costs associated with *inaction* on the climate crisis. We were willing to vote for trillions of dollars in emergency spending in 2020 and early 2021, virtually none of which was paid for, in order to address the severe health and economic consequences of COVID-19. We support additional investments in our country, but will insist they be paid for.
- Third, given the potential size and scope of this bill, the procedure by which it is crafted must be thoughtful and transparent. It is critical that, at every stage of this process, members be given enough time to understand the bill’s provisions and to register their support or concern. At a minimum, once the 13 committees that received reconciliation instructions report their sections of the bill and the bill is consolidated into a single piece of legislation by the Budget Committee, members should have at least 72 hours to evaluate the complete measure before it is considered on the House floor.

We look forward to working with you, the chairs of our committees, and President Biden to produce a bill that we are proud of and that delivers for the American people.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress



Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress