



September 17, 2020

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

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing patients, consumers, and small businesses, and members of *No Surprises: People Against Unfair Medical Bills*, **we strongly urge you to take immediate action to pass a ban on surprise billing, whether in in the next COVID-19 pandemic response package or otherwise.** It is well past time to provide consumers relief from this unfair and often devastating practice, particularly as coronavirus infection rates climb and financial insecurity for families remains at record levels.

Surprise billing was a common and destructive problem prior to the pandemic, and the situation is even more dire now. Press reports continue to underscore the vast number of consumers receiving high, unexpected medical bills related to COVID-19 testing, facility fees, laboratory services, and treatment.<sup>i</sup> Many health policy experts have warned that even surprise bills unrelated to COVID-19 are more likely during the pandemic. As local providers are overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients, families are likely to be pushed to out-of-network hospitals for health emergencies or routine care.<sup>ii</sup>

Your leadership in this moment is essential. Congress and the Administration have simply not yet done enough to protect consumers from these unexpected and unfounded out-of-pocket costs. We welcomed the initial steps taken earlier this year to chip away at this problem, including the HHS guidance for hospitals and emergency funding provided in the CARES Act, but failure to enact comprehensive reform has left significant loopholes that has allowed the insidious practice of surprise billing to continue. Every day that goes by puts thousands of additional families at risk of receiving a surprise medical bill.

It's time for action. **There is bipartisan, bicameral agreement on a solution with widespread support and the backing of the White House.** We urge you to put the needs of families above the frustrations of internal politics, and **take immediate action to ban surprise bills** to ensure that families can seek necessary care without facing devastating financial burdens at this critical time.

Sincerely,

## No Surprises Campaign Members

American Kidney Fund  
American Medical Student Association  
Consumer Reports  
Families USA Action  
Health Access California  
Health Care for America Now (HCAN)  
Indivisible  
MomsRising  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Consumers League  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
Public Citizen  
Voices for Progress  
Young Invincibles

## Additional Supporting Organizations

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)  
Breast Cancer Action  
Center for Medicare Advocacy  
Center for Public Representation  
Children's Defense Fund - Texas  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Every Texan (formerly Center for Public Policy Priorities)  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Kentucky Voices for Health  
Missouri Health Care For All  
National Birth Equity Collaborative  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Health Law Program  
National Women's Health Network  
New Jersey Citizen Action  
San Francisco AIDS Foundation  
Shriver Center on Poverty Law  
Small Business Majority  
Tennessee Health Care Campaign  
U.S. PIRG  
WV Citizen Action Group

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Kliff, "Two Friends in Texas Were Tested for Coronavirus. One Bill Was \$199. The Other? \$6,408." *The New York Times*, June 29, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/29/upshot/coronavirus-tests-unpredictable-prices.html>; Sarah Kliff, "Kept at the Hospital on Coronavirus Fears, Now Facing Large Medical Bills," *The New York Times*, February 29, 2020, updated March 10, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/29/upshot/coronavirus-surprise-medicalbills.html>; Sarah Kliff, "Most Coronavirus Tests Cost About \$100. Why Did One Cost \$2,315?" *The*

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*New York Times*, June 16, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/16/upshot/coronavirus-test-cost-varies-widely.html>; Elisabeth Rosenthal and Emmarie Huetteman, "Analysis: He Got Tested for Coronavirus. Then Came the Flood Of Medical Bills," *Kaiser Health News*, April 1, 2020, <https://khn.org/news/covid19-coronavirus-test-surprise-medical-bill/>.

<sup>ii</sup> Jack Hoadley, Kevin Lucia, Katie Keith, "Keeping Surprise Billing out of Coronavirus Treatment" *Health Affairs*, April 2, 2020, <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hauthor20171011.488106/full/>.