

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2020

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

The Honorable Richard Neal
Chair, Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chair, Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Neal and Chairman Scott,

Thank you for your incredible efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic impacting our country in unprecedented ways. As you work to secure the health safety and financial safety of every American in this country, we would like you to consider two measures in the forthcoming relief or triage package we are preparing for American workers and families.

In the face of market volatility and reduced bond yields caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress should consider protecting the pension funds for millions of hardworking Americans. As you know, the *Butch Lewis Act*, which passed the House with bipartisan support on July 26 is long overdue legislation that will secure the pensions of over a million hard working American families who know fault of their own are at risk of losing their hard earned retirement. It was an honor to help lead the passage of this bill from the House floor and we have since waited over 230 days for the Senate to do the same. In the meantime, this crisis remains unresolved for the people who are waiting relief. As we begin to think about relief in the forthcoming days for hard working Americans immediately stripped of their jobs and earnings in the emergency response to this spreading pandemic, we must not forget those who have long been waiting to relieve the uncertainty around the securitization of their pensions. We would please like for you to consider including Butch Lewis in our forthcoming relief packages particularly as you are in negotiations with the Senate.

Additionally, the enormous impacts on small businesses and their employees are extensive. Many businesses, particularly in the restaurant sector, would like the assurance of being able to stay afloat during this hibernation period. It is painful for these businesses to have to lay off or limit work hours for their employees as revenues diminish by more than half. In order to guarantee the jobs of individuals at pre-COVID-19 levels, we are proposing to include a **Bridge Employment Retention (BER) program** to be administered by the Department of Labor. As an

elective program, BER would allow businesses and employers to enter into contractual arrangements to guarantee a return to work once the COVID-19 social isolation period has concluded. The Department of Labor would convene the appropriate and legal documents for which employers could apply.

Once the employer has initiated and been qualified for BER, they could offer this contractual agreement to their furloughed employees to secure employment similar to an FMLA structure. It is painful to see long time establishments in our community close their operations and lay off workers they no longer have the revenue to maintain. A program like BER could guarantee jobs and/or positions upon the reopening of the business and reassure many recently terminated employees about their future.

Thank you for your consideration to these matters.

Sincerely,



Haley Stevens
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress