



CPW-UAW

A UNION FOR POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



April 21, 2020

Dear NYS US Representatives and Senators Schumer and Gillibrand,

We write on behalf of the nearly 2,000 Postdoctoral and Associate Research Scientists and Scholars at Columbia University. Many of us perform the frontline research that is critical to understanding, planning for, and mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We write first to thank you for taking quick action to protect our communities by passing the CARES Act and including financial support for science -- funding agencies, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and others. This initial support will help ensure that our research on COVID-19 continues and can keep pace with the scale of the crisis.

Postdoctoral and Associate Research Scientists at Columbia have developed and administered diagnostic tests, are working tirelessly to contribute to biobanking that enables further research on potential treatments and vaccines, and are volunteering to administer personal protective equipment in hospitals across NYC. We are modeling how the disease spreads and what steps need to be taken to minimize its impact. We are proud to do our part in this difficult moment. However, as the shutdown continues, funding shortfalls could become catastrophic for not only COVID-19 research, but also the larger research operations of our universities.

We therefore urgently request additional support for the workforces that sustain research in our nation's higher education system: Postdoctoral and Associate Research Scientists. We, alongside others, are integral to Universities' ability to emerge from this crisis and continue to perform leading-edge research and instruction. This support is critical for our members and the many others whose health and security depends on rapid and effective research-based solutions.

While everyone is dealing with the impacts of this crisis, many of our members struggle with additional burdens. International students and researchers, for example, face travel restrictions, visa processing delays, work authorization deadlines, and lack of access to social service programs. Other members with fixed-term appointments or holding student status are uncertain as to whether safety net programs that have admirably expanded at Congress' charge will apply to them. All of our members are facing an increasingly tight job market, and international researchers cannot even apply for work outside of University if their positions are lost. Thus our workforce, which has stepped up to help in the battle against COVID-19 and will be critical to the post-COVID transition and recovery at our research universities, are particularly vulnerable to lost employment.



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We therefore urge you to provide:

1. Supplemental appropriations for federal agencies and direct support to institutions to continue to employ personnel until operations return to full speed. This should include necessary regulatory measures to ensure that this support can be used for wages, benefits, and tuition support for all personnel. Recommendations by the Association of American Universities (see April 14th letter) detail a minimum \$26 billion appropriations need.
2. Support for international students and scholars. Provide sufficient funding for the State Department and USCIS to take all necessary steps to clear visa backlogs, ensure those who are already here can receive the support they need to remain safely in place, and ensure those who wish to come here to work and study in the future face minimal obstacles.
3. Additional funding for students and institutions via the Education Stabilization Fund (at least \$46.6 billion) so that student financial need is met and people hit hardest by the economic and health impacts of the pandemic can continue to afford to go to school.
4. Tax fixes and adjustments so that institutions can have access to revenue sources that other employers received through the CARES Act (e.g. FMLA and Payroll Tax Credits).

We are ready to work with your offices to elaborate on these measures. Thank you for your quick action and your continued service during these unprecedented times. We will continue to do our part to help our communities stay safe, healthy, and prosperous after we have weathered the worst of the crisis.

Sincerely,
CPW-UAW Bargaining Committee

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