

**Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**Senator Maggie Hassan**  
**Committee on Finance**  
**Paid Leave Working Group**  
**June 18, 2020, 11 am**

Thank you, Senator Cassidy for helping facilitate this important discussion today.

I also want to thank members of the paid leave working group for participating and Senate Finance Chair Grassley and Ranking Member Wyden for joining this conversation as well. And thank you to our witnesses for being here to speak to this very important issue.

As our country grapples with COVID-19, Congress must do more to ensure that workers have the support that they need to not only get back to work, but also take care of their own health and meet the caregiving needs of their loved ones.

In response to this pandemic, Congress acted quickly to address some of the needs of some of our most vulnerable workers. However, since the emergency paid leave provisions enacted in COVID-19 relief packages have gone into effect, it has become clear that many workers continue to lack much-needed access to paid leave.

For example, under the emergency paid leave provisions, workers may access expanded family leave if their children's schools are closed, but not if their child has been removed from school because of a significant health risk. And employers with more than 500 employees – who employ more than 50 percent of American workers – have no obligation to provide paid sick leave under these provisions. We must not allow millions of workers to be left behind.

Regardless of personal circumstances, a worker should not have to choose between a paycheck and their own health. This has always been true, but as we work to meet the needs of our current unprecedented circumstances, the urgency to act is greater than ever.

As stay-at-home orders are lifted and people are encouraged to go back into the workplace, Congress must provide workers with the opportunity to stay home from work when they are sick and ensure that they have the ability to care for themselves and their families. Doing so will help limit the spread of the virus and keep communities healthy.

Keeping workers, families, and communities healthy is essential to a strong economy. Our country – and this Congress should, at this moment, finally realize that we cannot separate the health of our workers and the health of our economy.

And while the COVID-19 pandemic has had a unique far-reaching impact, long before this crisis began families across our country had been forced to make gut-wrenching decisions about their own health and their family's well-being because they did not have access to necessary paid leave. If we fail to act at this critical juncture, this unacceptable state of affairs will continue long after this crisis recedes.

I hope that we can all learn from this crisis and continue to work together to pass universal paid family, medical, and sick leave to protect workers now and for years to come. Our economy, and our country, will be stronger for it.

Thank you.