

April 21, 2020

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: United Steelworkers support H.R. 6514, the Worker Health Coverage Protection Act

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 850,000 members of the United Steelworkers, **we strongly urge you to support and cosponsor the Worker Health Coverage Protection Act.**

In the wake of the coronavirus crisis, the United States has seen over 22 million people file for unemployment insurance. With health insurance tied to the employment of 55% of the American workforce, many newly unemployed and furloughed workers are being offered COBRA insurance coverage by their employers. However, the prohibitively high cost to maintain COBRA benefits is a significant financial burden for workers trying to preserve their vital healthcare coverage.

The Economic Policy Institute released a report estimating that over 9.2 million workers were at risk of losing their health insurance in the last four weeks alone.¹ With this number expected to grow, it is vitally important that Congress ensure that workers experiencing job and income loss in the middle of this pandemic are able to maintain access to health care by subsidizing COBRA premiums for unemployed workers and their families.

The Worker Health Coverage Protection Act, introduced by Representatives Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (VA), Steven Horsford (NV), and Debbie Dingell (MI), would provide 100% federal financing to cover the full cost of COBRA premiums owed by workers who have lost their jobs, who are furloughed, or who have had their hours reduced as a result of the coronavirus crisis. The bill will provide stability and ensure continuity of care for millions of workers and their families. This builds on Congressional actions during the Great Recession when Congress provided COBRA subsidies for impacted workers under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

¹ <https://www.epi.org/blog/9-2-million-workers-likely-lost-their-employer-provided-health-insurance-in-the-past-four-weeks/>

It is essential that Congress does its part to ensure all workers have access to health care during the national pandemic. In order to ensure that unemployed workers and their families are able to maintain their health insurance, our union urges you to support and cosponsor H.R. 6514, the Worker Health Coverage Protection Act.

Sincerely,


Thomas Conway
International President