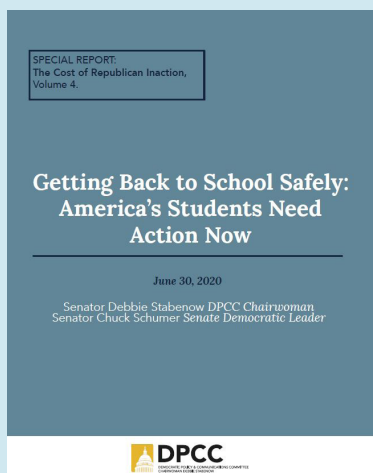
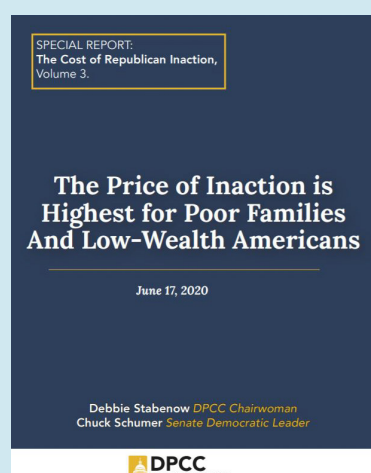
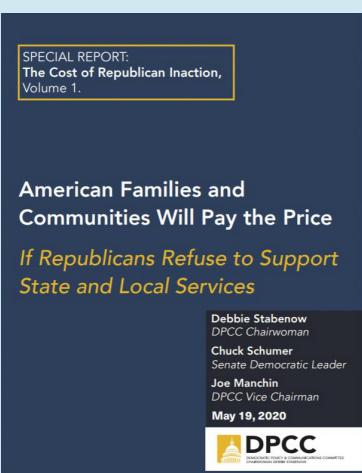


# During the COVID-19 Crisis, Senate Democrats Are Putting People First

**Debbie Stabenow**  
**DPCC Chairwoman**  
June 30, 2020



# Executive Summary

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the United States was reported on January 20. Since that day, nearly 2.6 million cases have been reported. Shockingly and sadly, more than 125,000 Americans have died. The virus has left no part of our nation untouched as it continues its deadly spread.

The Trump Administration and Congressional Republicans chose not to take this pandemic seriously for months while every other country was launching a national strategy for testing and taking other proactive actions to protect their citizens.

When they did start to address the pandemic, the Trump Administration was not willing to develop a national strategy to contain COVID-19 and save American lives. Governors across the country have been pitted against each other as they compete to find critical personal protective equipment and other lifesaving medical equipment, including ventilators. The lack of a national strategy to attack this pandemic has created chaos and unnecessary loss of life.

Now, the rush to reopen the economy without adequate safeguards and a lack of acknowledgment of the continuing seriousness of the pandemic is causing increased threats.

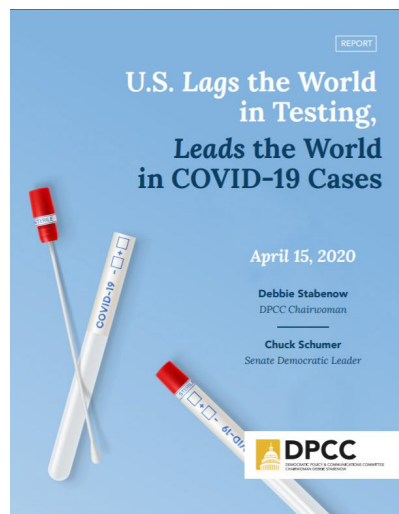
And on top of all of this, too many Americans have been devastated economically through no fault of their own.

Democrats have taken a different approach, putting people first. We continue to demand the creation of a coordinated national action plan centered on fighting for American lives and livelihoods. In a series of reports beginning in April, we have laid out the toll of the epidemic: the Administration's failures on testing. How rural communities have been harmed. The bright light the epidemic has shown on racial disparities. The impact on mental health. How state and local services are hurt by Republican inaction. The sacrifices made by our essential workers. The cost borne by poor families and low-wealth Americans. And the profound effects of the pandemic on our schools and our children's education.

Two goals are at work here. First, we must hold the Trump Administration and Congressional Republicans accountable for their actions – and egregious inactions. And second, there's still so much to do to manage this pandemic and save lives, prevent additional economic harm, and protect our communities. Democrats have real solutions, and the following reports are full of action items that simply require Republicans to work with us and act.

COVID-19 has left no community untouched. It's time for Senate Republicans to choose action.

## U.S. Lagged the World in Testing, Has Nearly a Quarter of COVID-19 Cases Worldwide

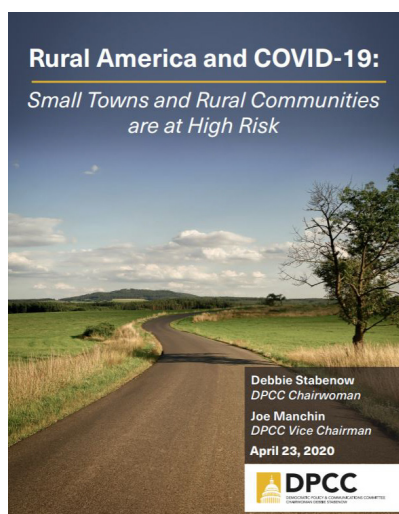


The first case of COVID-19 was reported in the United States on January 20. The Trump Administration chose not to take the risk seriously. It failed to implement widespread national testing and waited months to declare a national emergency or even try to procure essential medical equipment and supplies. In fact, at his recent Oklahoma political rally, President Trump said he wants his people to “slow the testing down, please.” The Administration’s reckless delay and lack of urgency continues to cost American lives. The U.S. has the highest number of cases and deaths in the world because of this lack of leadership.

Senate Democrats have been focused on expanding testing since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Senate Democrats laid out a testing roadmap to safely reopen our country. In the interim coronavirus bill, they fought for and secured \$25 billion for testing.

Read the report [here](#).

## Rural America is at High Risk during the COVID-19 Crisis

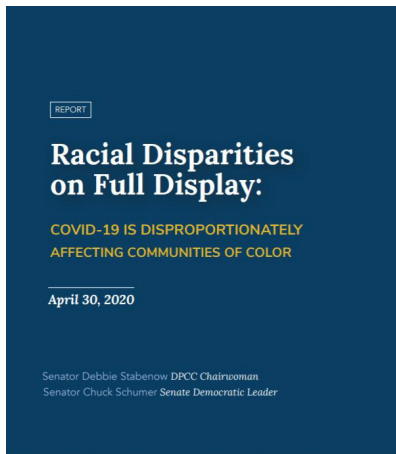


While initial hot spots of COVID-19 were centered in urban communities, infections have since expanded into rural areas. Severe testing shortages and unique working conditions have caused explosions of COVID-19 cases in many rural communities. This is particularly notable in meatpacking plants, where outbreaks have occurred among essential food supply chain employees, the majority of whom are people of color, immigrants, or refugees. As of June 26, there have been over 28,000 cases tied to meatpacking plants, and 102 reported deaths. Outbreaks on farms have also been increasing, and over 2,000 farmworkers have tested positive. Senate Democrats have called for action to protect essential food workers and laid out recommendations for ways the Trump Administration should improve worker safety.

Families in rural communities face disparities that put them at high risk of infection and complications from COVID-19 and increase the challenges of addressing the pandemic, including: under-resourced health care systems, high rates of chronic health conditions, lack of access to reliable high-speed internet, economic vulnerability, and greater food insecurity. Senate Democrats are fighting to provide every town in America with the necessary resources to overcome the challenges of COVID-19, including widespread rapid testing, high-speed internet funding, protections and heroes pay for essential workers, relief for farmers, support for rural businesses, increased food assistance, and a rural task force.

Read the report [here](#).

## Racial Disparities on Full Display: COVID-19 is Disproportionately Affecting Communities of Color



COVID-19 has taken an especially heavy toll on communities of color. For a variety of reasons, people of color are less likely to have steady access to quality medical care and are more likely to have preventable, manageable conditions that are made worse because of a lack of medical access. They are less likely to live in neighborhoods with available healthy food options and more likely to face exposure to environmental factors that affect health. People of color are also more likely to work service industry jobs or jobs that do not offer sick leave and have been deemed essential. Nationally, Black deaths from COVID-19 are nearly two times higher than expected based on their share of the population. In 42 states plus Washington D.C., Latinx make up a greater share of cases than their share of the population.

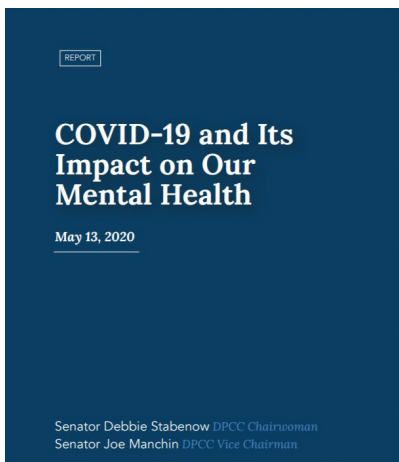


Senate Democrats are fighting to ensure the voices and struggles of communities of color are heard and that discrimination is addressed.

Senate Democrats are working to ensure that communities of color have access to quality, affordable health coverage and COVID-19 testing and treatment. Senate Democrats are also working to increase pay and protections for frontline workers, expand paid leave for families, and strengthen water and broadband infrastructure.

Read the report [here](#).

## COVID-19 and Its Impact on Our Mental Health



COVID-19 is taking a massive toll on the mental health of Americans. Prior to COVID-19, experts estimated that one in every five people suffered from a mental illness, and America's behavioral health system was already overworked and underfunded. Behavioral health is frequently funded at lower rates than physical health, creating gaps in coverage and a lack of access to quality services. Meanwhile, behavioral health centers and professionals are struggling with the massive increased need for their services, and many Americans have been unable to access care. A survey conducted in April 2020 of 880 behavioral health facilities found that nearly two out of three centers believe that they can survive financially for only three months or less under current conditions.



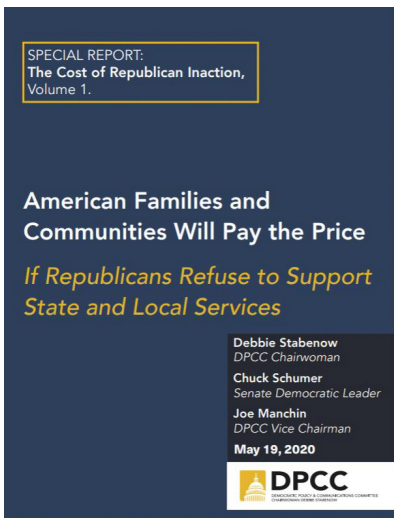
Senate Democrats are committed to ensuring those with mental illness and substance use disorders are not left behind during this pandemic.

In addition to behavioral health research funding and equal reimbursement for telehealth, Senate Democrats are fighting to provide robust funding to behavioral health centers and other mental health providers. Senate Democrats are also working to fully fund Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics, which integrate physical health, mental health and substance-use treatment; provide 24/7 crisis care; work with law enforcement and schools; and coordinate with hospitals to reduce emergency room visits.

Read the report [here](#).



## The Cost of Republican Inaction, Volume 1: American Families and Communities Will Pay the Price if Republicans Refuse to Support State and Local Services

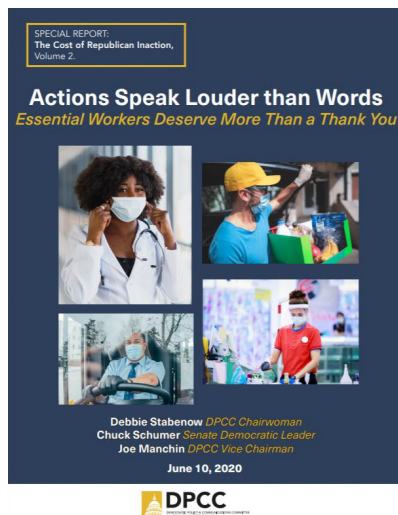


Across the country, state and local governments are grappling with severe budget deficits that threaten the indispensable services they provide in health care, education, emergency response, public safety, and so much more. State and local governments have already cut 1.4 million jobs and slashed funding for critical services. Without urgent federal assistance, these cuts will affect our safety, the education of our children, and our overall quality of life. They will also prolong our nation's recovery from this unprecedented health and economic crisis.

Senate Democrats have called on Senator Mitch McConnell to pass the Heroes Act, which provides states, localities, Tribes, and territories with the resources they need to protect their residents and rebuild their economies.

Read the report [here](#).

## The Cost of Republican Inaction, Volume 2: Actions Speak Louder than Words Essential Workers Deserve More Than Just A Thank You

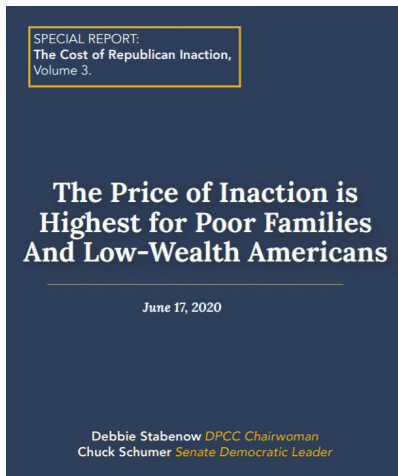


Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, essential workers have been putting their lives on the line to ensure Americans have access to important goods and services. These sectors include health care, behavioral health, transportation, emergency response, senior care, child protection, farming, food inspection, package and mail delivery, and so much more. These workers are disproportionately women, people of color, and caregivers to school-aged children. They are risking their health and lives to keep our communities functioning. Yet President Trump and Senator McConnell have refused to provide these essential workers the hazard pay they have earned and the safe workplaces they deserve.

Senate Democrats worked to propose the Heroes Fund to provide premium pay to essential front-line workers in recognition of the great personal sacrifices they have made to keep the country running and as an incentive to stay on the job. Senate Democrats are also leading the fight to ensure that workers are safe on the job with enforceable workplace standards and adequate supplies of protective equipment to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and protect our communities.

Read the report [here](#).

## The Cost of Republican Inaction, Volume 3: The Price of Inaction is Highest for Poor Families and Low-Wealth Americans

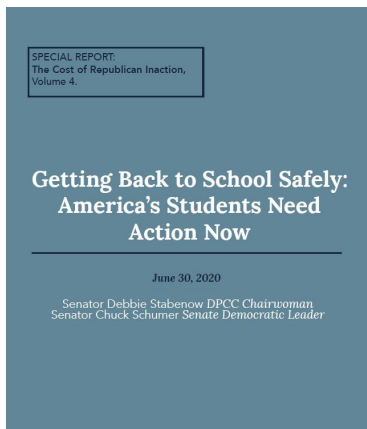


Before the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly 40 million Americans were already living in poverty, and one in four Americans were “just getting by” or “finding it difficult to get by.” COVID-19 has pushed these poor and low-wealth individuals into further despair, exacerbating income and racial inequalities in America. Low-wage workers – many of whom are people of color and women – were the first to lose their jobs in this crisis, and they face more barriers to getting them back. With less money in savings, these individuals are more likely to go hungry and lose their homes from eviction or foreclosure. Many lack affordable health care, paid sick days, access to clean water, internet, and other services vital to staying safe and connected during these unprecedented times.

Senate Democrats know it’s time to act to provide economic opportunity and support to all Americans. It’s time to give Americans a living wage so they can afford rent and pay their bills while saving for a better future. And it’s time to pass the Heroes Act, which extends lifesaving measures due to expire very soon and provides even more support to America’s most vulnerable people and families.

Read the report [here](#).

## The Cost of Republican Inaction, Volume 4: Getting Back to School Safely: America’s Students Need Action Now



COVID-19 has closed schools, colleges, and universities across the country, shifting them to distance learning and exacerbating educational inequities for our most vulnerable students. Reductions in state and local revenues are also placing enormous strain on the budgets of public schools and colleges and other social services. Our economy can’t fully reopen unless parents can return to work. And parents can’t return to work if they aren’t confident that their children will be safe in schools. In addition to managing the overwhelming and urgent demands associated with school closures, distance learning, and devastating budget cuts, educators and college and school leaders must now contemplate the additional costs of reopening in the fall.

Senate Democrats are fighting so that schools and educators have the immediate resources necessary to ensure that students don’t fall further behind in their education. Senate Democrats are also fighting to make sure that schools can reopen safely in the fall and continue to provide critical services for vulnerable students.

Read the report [here](#).