

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Calls for Senate Passage of American Rescue Plan to Vaccinate More Wisconsinites and Expand Access to Affordable Health Care During COVID-19 Pandemic

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) today joined Senators Chris Murphy (D-CT) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) to call for Senate passage of the American Rescue Plan to address the major public health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This week, the U.S. Senate is taking up a comprehensive package of legislation passed by the U.S. House of Representatives that will increase vaccinations and testing, ensure access to health coverage, promote health equity, and invest in behavioral health.

“We have not beaten this pandemic and people are still struggling in Wisconsin and across this country. We need to take bold action to address the ongoing public health and economic crisis we are facing by passing the American Rescue Plan now. Despite the fact that not a single House Republican from Wisconsin voted to support our state, House Democrats got the job done to fund vaccine distribution and expand access to quality, affordable health care coverage,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “Now we need to pass this legislation in the Senate so Wisconsin and local communities have the funding we need to more quickly get vaccine shots into people’s arms. The American Rescue Plan is the investment our state needs to beat

the pandemic, save our economy, and start getting our lives back to normal.”

The American Rescue Plan will provide federal funding to Wisconsin to get vaccines into Americans’ arms more quickly and provide crucial supplies, testing, and staffing to stop the spread of COVID-19. It also lowers or eliminates health insurance premiums for millions of Americans and addresses systemic inequities through investments in underserved communities and communities of color.

Vaccines and Testing

Vaccines and testing are essential to slow the spread of COVID-19. The American Rescue Plan Act contains billions in funding to get vaccines into Americans’ arms more quickly and provide crucial supplies, testing, and staffing to stop the spread of COVID-19. The bill includes:

- \$50 billion for testing, genomic sequencing of variants, and contact tracing efforts, as well as manufacturing and procurement of PPE
- \$20 billion for improving vaccine administration and distribution
- \$10 billion for the Defense Production Act to procure essential PPE and other medical equipment
- \$8 billion for public health workforce development

Health Coverage During the Pandemic and Beyond

Between March and September 2020, as many as 3 million Americans lost their employer-sponsored health insurance. Americans must have affordable health insurance during and after this unprecedented public health crisis.

The American Rescue Plan Act will ensure access to health coverage by:

- Lowering or eliminating health insurance premiums for millions of Americans who buy insurance through the marketplaces through increased tax credits, reducing premiums by potentially thousands of dollars each year
- Providing incentives for states to expand Medicaid by increasing federal supports, which could provide health insurance coverage to nearly 4 million Americans, including 640,000 frontline or essential workers, if expanded nationwide
- Subsidizing continuation health coverage (COBRA) for those who have lost their employer-sponsored coverage

Health Equity

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clearer than ever that we must address racial and ethnic disparities and promote health equity. A disproportionate number of people of color have been diagnosed with, hospitalized by, or died from COVID-19, and communities of color currently have lower vaccination rates.

The American Rescue Plan Act will work to address systemic inequities through a \$25.2 billion investment in underserved communities and communities of color, including:

- \$7.6 billion for community health centers, Federally Qualified Health Center Look-Alikes, and Native Hawaiian Health Centers
- \$3.3 billion for the Indian Health Service
- \$1 billion for emergency assistance for children, families, and workers through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program
- \$250 million for nursing home strike teams to manage COVID-19 outbreaks and another \$200 million for infection control in nursing homes
- \$188 million to protect the elderly and fight elder abuse
- \$150 million for the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program
- \$50 million for the Title X Family Planning Program
- Allowing states to provide Medicaid coverage for one year postpartum to address the maternal health crisis disproportionately affecting communities of color
- Increased federal support through Medicaid for home- and community-based services

Behavioral Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on the mental health of many Americans, further straining mental and behavioral health and substance use disorder services that have been historically underfunded.

The American Rescue Plan Act aims to increase access to mental health and substance use disorder services, treatment, and prevention with \$4 billion in funding, including:

- \$3.5 billion for the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Community

Mental Health Block Grants

- \$420 million to the Indian Health Service for behavioral health services
- \$140 million to develop a program to support providers' mental health and decrease burnout of providers and public safety officers
- \$100 million to the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Program to train behavioral health paraprofessionals, such as peer support specialists
- \$80 million in new grants for community-based and behavioral health organizations
- \$50 million to support youth mental health and suicide prevention
- \$10 million for the National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network

More information on how the American Rescue Plan will address the major public health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is [available here](#).

Video from today's Zoom press availability is available for [download here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).