

US CEOs urge Congress to provide help to small businesses

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Former Starbucks chief Howard Schultz was behind a letter by more than 100 CEOs warning of "catastrophic" damage to the economy unless Congress provides aid to small businesses

More than 100 American business leaders sent a letter to top Congressional lawmakers on Monday urging them to lay aside partisan bickering and approve emergency aid for small businesses suffering during the coronavirus pandemic.

Leaders of companies like Walmart, Facebook, Google-parent Alphabet and Starbucks warned of a "catastrophic" impact on the economy and employment if federal aid is withheld from companies dealing with the devastating impact of the COVID-19 shutdowns.

The CARES Act passed by Congress in late March authorized several lending programs to help companies weather the crisis, but its additional \$600 per-week in federal unemployment payments to workers laid off amid the pandemic has lapsed, as has its moratorium on evictions for those who rent their homes.

"Small businesses are too critical to our country's [economic strength](#) to let fail," the [business leaders](#) said in the letter.

These firms largely do not have enough cash on hand to wait for a coronavirus vaccine and face "potential financial ruin that will make the nation's current economic downturn last years longer than it must."

"At this moment of crisis, we urge you to transcend partisanship," the letter said.

They called for federally-guaranteed loans, which can be at least partially forgiven and last for more than two-to-three months, for all [small businesses](#) that need it, especially for minority-owned firms.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has been meeting with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi regularly, including over the weekend, to negotiate a new spending measure but the sides remain far from a deal.

Mnuchin said Sunday that President Donald Trump's administration wants to ensure schools reopen and opposes any support for state and local governments, despite facing a massive increase in expenditures caused by the pandemic.

"The Democrats, right now, are insisting on over a trillion dollars" to state and local governments, and "that's something that we're not going to do, to bail out those states that had [financial issues](#)," Mnuchin said on ABC's This Week.

He also again claimed that the extra federal payments to jobless workers means they earn more staying home than they do by working.

Pelosi pushed back on that notion, saying the Republican proposal to cut the payments to \$200 a week "does not meet the needs of America's working families."

"Overwhelmingly this is making a difference, it's keeping people out of poverty," Pelosi said Sunday on the same program, adding that "we really need to support state and [local governments](#) to cover the expenses they have from the coronavirus."

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