UPDATE: #6, March 23, 2020

Membership Update – CORONAVIRUS

It’s Been a Long Weekend

Since our last UPDATE, Congress has been working non-stop to ensure Americans’ health and economic well-being are protected during this crisis. On Friday, the Family First Coronavirus Emergency Response, HR 6201, was signed into law. The third phase of the federal response stalled in the Senate amid the beginnings of quarantine procedures for Senate Republicans following Rand Paul (R-KY)’s announcement that he had contracted COVID-19.

The latest attempt to authorize a COVID-19 economic relief package was struck down after a 47-47 deadlock, with sixty "aye" votes required for passage. Several senators were not present due to self-quarantine, after Sen. Rand Paul announced he had tested positive for coronavirus.

A final deal and text have not yet been announced. The package is to be considered as an amendment to an unrelated tax bill (HR 748) that passed the House last year.

As far as what has passed, the Families First Act provides that employees of covered employers (under 500 employees) are eligible for:

- **Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of paid sick time at the employee’s regular rate of pay** where the employee is unable to work because the employee is quarantined (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order or advice of a health care provider), and/or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis; or
• **Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of paid sick time at two-thirds the employee’s regular rate of pay** because the employee is unable to work because of a bona fide need to care for an individual subject to quarantine (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order or advice of a health care provider), or to care for a child (under 18 years of age) whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19, and/or the employee is experiencing a substantially similar condition as specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of the Treasury and Labor; and

• **Up to an additional 10 weeks of paid family leave at two-thirds the employee’s regular rate of pay** where an employee, who has been employed for at least 30 calendar days, is unable to work due to a bona fide need for leave to care for a child whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19.

For more information please [click here](#).

While the law is clear that these leave mandates are for employers with under 500 employees, HCAOA and other national home care associations have written a letter to Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia urging him to include home care under the definition of health care provider for purpose of excluding home care organization from the definition of eligible employee.

HCAOA members have also done their part by sending nearly 25,000 messages to Congress urging them to consider home care as health care.

“Our employees are the lifeblood of our organization, and lifelines to every one of our clients,” said HCAOA Executive Director Vicki Hoak. “While many of our organizations already provide these benefits, we must be able to ensure that our operations will be able to continue alongside other health care providers as this pandemic reaches its peak in the next several weeks and months.”

These employer mandates under the Families First Coronavirus Responses Act must be implemented by April 2 – record speed for the federal
government. However, that accelerated timeframe is necessary for our country to do whatever it can to ensure economic stability. HCAOA will continue to update its members on where we stand as more information becomes available.

**Caregiver is Exposed? Now What?**

What if your home care aide was exposed to COVID? What steps does your organization take? [Click here](#) to see sample guidance on what an agency should do in this case.

**Brilliant: Testing, Treatment and Immunity will be Key for “Return to Normalcy”**

Larry Brilliant, part of the WHO team that eliminated smallpox in the 1970s, gave an [in-depth interview to Wired](#) where he explained how the coronavirus outbreak can be contained, and what needs to happen for the world to “return to normal.”

Brilliant noted one of the first things that needs to be done in the U.S. is a wave of testing to let us know whether we’re looking at an “iceberg or a pyramid.” He explains that South Korea’s efforts to get as many people tested as quickly as possible gave that country’s health officials the chance to get a full picture of where the disease was and where to direct further prevention efforts, and the country reported fewer than 100 cases late last week. Further, he claims that it’s still not too late to get tests ramped up in the U.S., because detection will help with more targeting isolation protocols.

Brilliant also emphasized the importance of getting personal protective equipment, such as the N-95 mask, to anyone who works with patients. “In the latest data I saw, the mask provided 5x protection. That’s really good,” he said. “But we have to keep the hospitals going and we have to keep the
health professionals able to come to work and be safe. So masks should go where they’re needed the most: in taking care of patients.”

**Other Concerns?**

If you have any other concerns that are not currently being addressed, please email [info@hcaoa.org](mailto:info@hcaoa.org)