



LOCAL 5810

2030 Addison Street, Suite 640B
Berkeley, CA 94704
p: (510) 845-5726 f: (510) 845-5863
uaw5810@uaw5810.org

LOCAL 2865

2030 Addison Street, Suite 640A
Berkeley, CA 94704
p: (510) 549-3863 f: (510) 549-2514
uaw2865@uaw2865.org

April 23, 2020

CALIFORNIA CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

Dear Members of Congress:

We write on behalf of UAW 2865 and UAW 5810, representing 19,000 Academic Student Employees and 11,000 Postdoctoral Scholars and Academic Researchers at the University of California, respectively. Our members are critical to the three pillars of UC's mission —teaching, research, and public service. Currently, we make up the majority of the workforce that is transitioning from in-person to remote instruction for over 200,000 UC undergraduate students, and we are researching how to mitigate and ultimately defeat the COVID-19 pandemic.

We write first to thank you for taking swift action to protect our campuses and our communities by passing the CARES Act and including financial support for agencies including the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, and others. This will help ensure that our research on COVID-19 continues to keep pace with the scale of the crisis, and that we are able to aid the rebuilding effort by advancing new innovations to meet the needs of the nation and world.

UAW members at UC are researching potential treatments and vaccines, running samples at UC's COVID-19 testing facilities, and volunteering our skills to produce PPE for health care workers. We are modeling how the disease spreads and what steps need to be taken to minimize its impact. We are teaching classes so that students can continue to have access to skills and knowledge and can complete their degrees. Our members are proud to do our part to accommodate the strain of the current moment. But as the shutdown continues, funding shortfalls could become catastrophic.

We write therefore with urgency to request additional support for those who sustain the University of California and the nation's other higher education institutions: the researchers, teaching assistants, faculty, librarians, support staff and many others who are integral to the ability of universities to emerge from this crisis and continue to perform innovative research and instruction. This support is critical for our members and the many others whose health and security will depend on rapid and effective research-based solutions.

While everyone is dealing with the impacts of this crisis, many of our members struggle with additional challenges. International students and scholars, for example, face travel restrictions, visa processing delays, work authorization deadlines, and lack access to social service programs that many domestic workers take for granted. For others, there is uncertainty about what social safety net programs — which Congress has admirably expanded — will apply to them. But despite differences in their individual situations, all of our members are facing an increasingly tight job market, and an economic downturn that poses a threat to the positions that

we currently hold. Thus, the same workforce currently battling COVID-19 and working to protect our communities are themselves particularly vulnerable to lost employment.

As UAW members across California continue innovative research to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, we need your help to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 and enable future research breakthroughs that will drive the nation's economic recovery forward. To accomplish these goals, we urge you to provide the following:

1. *Supplemental appropriations of \$26 billion for federal research agencies to allow universities to sustain research, including personnel and other costs, until operations return to full speed.* This should include attending to necessary regulatory measures to ensure that this support can be used for wages, benefits and tuition support for all personnel.
2. *Recovery funding to support the research workforce.* Early-career researchers including postdoctoral scholars, graduate student researchers and research staff are directly impacted by research ramp-downs and hiring freezes. We ask that you extend postdoctoral and graduate student fellowships by at least one year and increase funding for early career researchers. These steps are indispensable to expanding opportunities for our diverse research workforce. Finally, additional supplementary funding is necessary to increase the number of postdoctoral scholars and graduate student researchers in the next cohort.
3. *Support for international students and scholars to ensure that they can continue their studies and research.* Provide sufficient funding for the State Department and USCIS to take all necessary steps to clear visa backlogs and restart H-1B premium processing. In addition, ensure that international students and scholars in the US can receive the support they need to remain safely in place, and that those who wish to come here to work and study will face minimal obstacles.
4. *Emergency funding for students and institutions via the Education Stabilization Fund.* A minimum of \$46.6 billion in emergency grants to students and research universities is necessary to address immediate financial need and to allow students hit hardest by the economic and health impacts of the pandemic to continue their education.
5. *Tax relief for students and universities.* Extend tax breaks and credits to benefit low-income students and allow universities to access revenue sources that other employers received through the CARES Act (e.g. FMLA and Payroll Tax Credits)
6. *Increased funding for new research infrastructure and instrumentation to improve future disaster response efforts.* This includes specific requests for infrastructure funding from NIH, NSF, NASA, NOAA, DoD, and DoE as laid out in the University of California's "COVID-19 Research-Related Priorities" Letter (April 14).

Thank you for your quick action and your continued service during these unprecedented times. We remain ready to do our part to secure safe and healthy communities that can continue to prosper after we have weathered the worst of the crisis. For more information or questions, please contact us.

Sincerely,



Kavitha Iyengar
President, UAW 2865
president@uaw2865.org



Anke Schennink, PhD
President, UAW 5810
president@uaw5810.org