

## **COVID-19 Recovery for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act (S.3740)**

Sponsored by: U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA), U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and  
U.S. Senator Doug Jones (D-AL)

While some steps have been taken to help protect older adults and people with disabilities from novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the prolonged nature of the pandemic, paired with its potency, requires additional action and investment. The *COVID-19 Recovery for Seniors and People with Disabilities Act* would:

**Focus the Social Security Administration (SSA) solely on helping people access critical benefits:** The bill would require the SSA temporarily halt activities that may require seniors and people with disabilities to make otherwise unnecessary doctor's visits or other appointments. This would include pausing continuing disability reviews, collection of over overpayments and cessation of benefits due to individuals failing to provide information by specific deadlines. The bill would also prevent SSA from advancing regulations that could make it harder for people to access and retain benefits.

**Increase timely access to disability benefits:** Millions of people with disabilities rely on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for their economic security, and these programs are even more essential during this pandemic and economic downturn. The bill would expand eligibility for these programs by increasing the extremely low asset and income limits for SSI and increasing the substantial gainful activity limit for SSDI. The bill would also suspend the 5-month waiting period for newly eligible SSDI recipients so they can access benefits immediately, automatically forgive student loan debt for SSDI recipients who have a permanent disability that prevents them from working, and help people with limited resources navigate the application and appeals processes.

**Ensure seniors and people with disabilities can enroll in Medicare without delay and afford their health care costs:** As of April 30, over 30 million Americans have lost their jobs as a result of the economic downturn brought about by COVID-19, and along with it, many have lost their health insurance. To ease the Medicare enrollment process for those eligible, the bill would close gaps in coverage for people who recently enrolled, create a Part B Special Enrollment Period to promote seamless enrollment and relax burdensome paperwork requirements for new enrollees. The bill would also eliminate the 24-month waiting period for Medicare coverage for new SSDI benefit recipients and expand eligibility for programs to help cover the cost of prescription drugs, doctor's visits and Medicare premiums by eliminating the asset test for these programs.

**Eliminate barriers to home and community-based services:** The bill would delay the implementation of the Electronic Visit Verification requirement until six months after the end of the national public health emergency in order to eliminate barriers to care in the home and keep people out of congregate settings.

**Expand access to shelf-stable food:** The bill would allow the 700,000 seniors who receive a food box through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program to have the option of contactless pick-up and provide additional funding for to increase the quantity of food in each box to limit how frequently a senior must leave the home.

**Help protect seniors from coronavirus-related scams:** The bill would provide funding to the Federal Trade Commission and Federal Communications Commission to educate seniors about coronavirus-related schemes.

**Provide coronavirus-related resources in non-English languages:** The bill would provide funding to help seniors with limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities access COVID-19-related information and benefits.

**Maintain access to legal services:** In order to maintain continued access to legal services, the bill would provide funding to support senior legal services, including senior legal hotlines.

**Cosponsors:** Senators Shaheen (D-NH), Van Hollen (D-MD), Harris (D-CA), Menendez (D-NJ), Reed (D-RI), Markey (D-MA) and Blumenthal (D-CT).

**Supporters:** More than **55 national and state organizations** representing older adults, people with disabilities and home health care workers, among others, support the bill, including:

1. Alliance Center for Independence
2. Alliance for Aging Research
3. Alliance for Retired Americans
4. Alzheimer's Association
5. Alzheimer's Impact Movement
6. AMDA: The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine
7. American Association on Health and Disability
8. American Diabetes Association
9. American Society on Aging
10. Arc of Greater Pittsburgh
11. Association of People Supporting Employment First
12. Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living
13. Association of University Centers on Disabilities
14. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
15. Brain Injury Association of America
16. Columbus GA Adapt
17. Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation
18. Disability Pride Philadelphia Inc.
19. Disability Rights California
20. Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
21. Freedom CIL
22. Georgia ADAPT
23. Global Down Syndrome Foundation
24. Independence Northwest, Inc.
25. Justice in Aging
26. Lakeshore Foundation
27. Latino Hispanic American Community Center
28. Lutheran Services in America
29. National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
30. National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
31. National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
32. National Association of RSVP Directors
33. National Association of Senior Legal Hotlines
34. National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
35. National Caucus and Center on Black Aging
36. National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
37. National Commodity Supplemental Food Program Association
38. National Down Syndrome Congress
39. National Hispanic Council on Aging
40. National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives
41. New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
42. North Central PA ADAPT
43. Real National ADAPT
44. Not Dead Yet
45. PA ADAPT
46. Pennsylvania Council on Independent Living
47. Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council
48. Savannah GA ADAPT
49. SeniorLAW Center
50. SF Access Appeals Commission
51. Social Security Works
52. Spina Bifida Resource Network
53. The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh
54. The Gerontological Society of America
55. United Cerebral Palsy
56. United States International Council on Disabilities
57. United Spinal Association
58. World Institute on Disability