

VICENTE GONZALEZ  
15TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
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December 11, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-230  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-224  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

As you continue to negotiate a coronavirus relief package, I write to you today on behalf of the constituents in the 15th District of Texas and urge you to include a direct stimulus payment for those suffering from the adverse effects of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Millions of Americans are without a job, others are struggling to pay their bills, put food on the table or buy prescription drugs. We owe it to them to come together and pass another round of Economic Impact Payments.

The future of our country may depend on your choices in the coming days. There is no need for additional evidentiary support for the dire circumstances many Americans find themselves in. Hardworking Americans who were once gainfully employed now, through no fault of their own, are facing eviction, and have lost their sources of income due to the widespread effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 15th District of Texas is home to Americans, Republican and Democrat both, who need not suffer while we work to resolve our policy differences. Let us not overlook these families who are in need. Since April 2020, Hidalgo County, the southernmost county in the 15th Congressional District of Texas, has lost 2,030 residents to COVID-19. The population of Hidalgo County represents only 3% of the state of Texas, but accounts for approximately 10% of COVID-related deaths. The entire Rio Grande Valley, comprised of Hidalgo, Cameron, Starr and Willacy counties,

represents 4.75% of the state population and approximately 17% of COVID-related deaths in Texas. Experts continue working to fully understand the factors that make South Texans so uniquely susceptible to the novel coronavirus. However, we can infer several factors including: high rates of comorbidities, poverty, uninsured patients, and multigenerational housing.

The Rio Grande Valley has increased rates of chronic illnesses known to increase the severity of a COVID-19 case such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. Unlike demographically similar regions such as San Antonio, Texas or El Paso, Texas, Rio Grande Valley residents are less likely to have health insurance; the uninsured rate in Texas is 17%, while the uninsured rate in the Rio Grande Valley is 32% - almost double the rate of the entire state. Additionally, South Texans also experience poverty at more than twice the rate of Texans, 30% as compared to 13% statewide.

The district I represent is comprised of a majority Hispanic population, one of the hardest hit by COVID-19 pandemic which has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. Today, more than ever, America and its people need you. Please do the right thing and provide a direct stimulus payment to all who need one.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'VGMA', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress