

An Open Letter To Congress For Further Financial Relief Measures

July 10, 2020

in [CWA Blog](#)



The following is a letter written by the Climbing Wall Association to Members of Congress regarding COVID-19. The letter recommends the passage of high-priority financial relief measures that would help address the threat the ongoing pandemic poses to small businesses, including climbing gyms. A [PDF version of the letter](#) is available for download.

RE: URGENT REQUEST TO CONGRESS TO PASS THE HEALTH AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY OMNIBUS EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS ACT, THE PANDEMIC RISK INSURANCE ACT, AND ADDRESS COMMERCIAL RENT ASSISTANCE FOR CLIMBING GYMS AND OTHER SMALL BUSINESSES

Dear Secretary Mnuchin, Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, Schumer and McCarthy:

We are grateful Congress extended funds through expanded Small Business Administration (SBA) loans and grants within the recent Senate proposals. We are deeply concerned, however, that the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic and the severity of the economic impacts of extended closures and reduced capacity operations will require more urgent relief measures for small businesses.

As you know, employers everywhere are permanently closing due to financial distress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Climbing gyms are no exception. The indoor climbing gym industry has been growing year-over-year for over 20 years and was forecasted to be an almost \$1 billion industry in 2020. Climbing gyms and other fitness and recreational facilities all face severe layoffs and the threat of bankruptcy during this crisis. This has affected, and will affect, tens of thousands of Americans. Through no fault of their own, climbing gyms are losing their ability to provide for members and employees due to lost revenue on account of massive forced public safety closures and reduced capacity operations. Climbing gyms and other such facilities rely on

memberships and active visits for survival.

The Climbing Wall Association (CWA) and its membership ask for Congress and the Administration to urgently pass the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, which we hope will support the industry and its employees, who live and work in practically every Congressional District, in enduring the present COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The HEROES Act includes, but is not limited to the following measures:

- Provides additional direct payments of up to \$1,200 per individual
- Expands paid sick days, family and medical leave, unemployment compensation, nutrition and food assistance programs, housing assistance, and payments to farmers
- Modifies and expands the Paycheck Protection Program, which provides loans and grants to small businesses and nonprofit organizations
- Establishes a fund to award grants for employers to provide pandemic premium pay for essential workers
- Expands several tax credits and deductions
- Provides funding and establishes requirements for COVID-19 testing and contact tracing
- Eliminates cost-sharing for COVID-19 treatments
- Extends and expands the moratorium on certain evictions and foreclosures
- Requires employers to develop and implement infectious disease exposure control plans

The bill also modifies or expands a wide range of other programs and policies, including those regarding Medicare and Medicaid, health insurance, medical product supplies, consumer protection requirements, and pension and retirement plans.

We also take this opportunity to reemphasize our support of the American Society of Association Executives' proposal for a pandemic risk insurance program (PRIP). This measure ("Pandemic Risk Insurance Act of 2020"; PRIA) would mandate that businesses who demonstrate significant business interruption and sharp decline in present and future revenue would be insured in case of a possible pandemic or epidemic.

This measure would create a federal "backstop," much like the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act (TRIA), for insurance claims related to a pandemic or epidemic. The specific purpose of pandemic risk insurance would be to provide for a federal loss-sharing program for certain insured losses resulting from a certified pandemic/epidemic.

Following are the ASAE's proposed details for PRIA:

1. This measure would create the PRIP, a three-year program to provide a government reinsurance backstop in the case of epidemic/pandemic.
2. For purposes of this measure, an epidemic is defined as the occurrence in a community or region of cases of an illness, specific health-related behavior, or health-related events clearly in excess of normal expectancy. A pandemic is defined as an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually

affecting a large number of people.

3. When the Secretary of Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Attorney General, certify that an “epidemic” or “pandemic” event has occurred within the confines of the United States, then this measure will immediately take effect.

The climbing industry and its employees also advocate for legislation that mandates eviction moratoriums and temporary rent relief measures for commercial tenants, especially small businesses like climbing gyms. This legislation should prohibit commercial evictions if the basis for eviction is the non-payment of rent due to financial impacts as a result of COVID-19 and should be applicable for a period of at least 3-6 months. Demonstrable financial hardship or disruption to business income due to COVID-19 is the recommended determining factor for commercial rent relief eligibility.

We request that Congress and the Administration enact measures to curtail the imposition of late fees and other charges related to unpaid commercial rent that may have accumulated since March 2020 due to financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to give landlords the support they need to take these steps. All levels of government and banks will need to come together to work to ease property tax and utility payments. These measures are necessary and overdue and must be enacted swiftly to avoid a massive default on rent, and the permanent closure of thousands of small businesses. The climbing industry and all small businesses need solutions that prevent us from going into unmanageable debt.

The business models of the climbing gym and fitness industries are uniquely vulnerable in the present crisis. As we confront this evolving and unprecedented period, we call on Congress and the Administration to ensure that America’s fitness and recreational facilities and their employees across the country can remain resilient. Tens of millions of Americans rely on these businesses in pursuit of a healthy lifestyle.

The Climbing Wall Association is the only trade association addressing the needs and interests of the indoor climbing industry. We serve climbing gyms, climbing wall operators, climbing wall manufacturers, equipment manufacturers, consultants and others involved in the climbing industry, and provide trade association services to more than 500 companies in the climbing industry. We provide relevant and actionable climbing business resources that keep the industry healthy and thriving. We do this through advocacy; developing industry standards; publishing industry news, data and analysis; sponsoring certification and professional development programs; and producing community-building and educational events.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support of our country during this challenging time. If you have questions regarding this urgent request for critically needed support for the fitness and recreation sectors, particularly climbing gyms, please contact Garnet Moore, CWA’s Executive Director, at garnet@cwapro.org or 720-534-2120.

Sincerely,

Rick Vance

Chairperson of the Board of Directors
Climbing Wall Association

Garnet Moore

Interim Executive Director
Climbing Wall Association



**CONSIDERATIONS FOR
RETURNING TO YOUTH
PROGRAMMING**

July 15, 2020

**A REVIEW OF CLIMBING GYM
REOPENING POLICIES – MAY 2020**



June 26, 2020