



CAL'S PRIORITIES FOR WHAT'S NEXT AS COMMUNITIES REOPEN: GUARDING AGAINST NEXT WAVE & FUTURE PANDEMICS, CREATING JOBS, & ENSURING SUPPORT REACHES ALL NORTH CAROLINIANS

In the Army, Cal learned that addressing a crisis means identifying critical objectives, planning a response, marshaling resources and communicating the plan clearly. The threat of COVID-19 demands that same leadership and good judgement, not only as our country addresses the health and economic impacts of this pandemic, but also as it begins to reopen. Here are Cal's priorities.

TESTS, SUPPLIES & CONTACT TRACING

Widespread Testing & Personal Protective Equipment To Help Us Reopen With Peace of Mind

Expanding the production and distribution of medical equipment and supplies is critical to our ability to open with peace of mind, keep frontline workers safe, and ensure we have the testing capacity we need.

Widespread testing and personal protective equipment (PPE) are critical to North Carolina's phased reopening plan, and to reopening nationwide. Testing and PPE availability were hampered by a combination of an ill-equipped national stockpile and the federal government's failure to provide clear direction and information to states, leaving them to bid against each other for medical supplies while cases increased. In a nation like ours, that should never have happened. Cal supports addressing these issues to establish a national testing regime and centralizing production and distribution of supplies so this doesn't happen again.

Cal's priorities for righting the federal testing and supply shortage include:

- **Establishing a national testing regime and contract tracing program** that would require the CDC to coordinate with state, local, and tribal health departments to create an evidenced-based system that allows us to test, track contacts, isolate, and quarantine appropriately while working toward a cure.
- **Centralizing responsibility for overseeing production and distribution under a single federal Medical Supplies Response coordinator** to serve as the single point of contact for the health care system, supply chain officials, and states on the distribution of medical supplies, PPE, drugs, and vaccines. We should also re-evaluate the medical supply chain and its reliance on other countries, including China. Furthermore, the Defense Production Act should have been invoked sooner to direct companies to start ramping up production of medical equipment, testing swabs, and PPE.

- **Investigating why the federal government shipped 18 tons of PPE and other critical medical equipment to China** in February when we should have been building national stockpiles, and why we continued to ship equipment to other countries up through April, despite shortages here at home.
- **Promoting American manufacturing and supply chains** for critical national priorities, such as pharmaceuticals and other technology-sensitive medical equipment and supplies.
- **Providing financial support to research institutions working to develop vaccines,** and preparing to manufacture and distribute a vaccine on a mass scale, while protecting U.S. intellectual property.

JOBS

Putting People Back To Work While Rebuilding Our Infrastructure & Prioritizing National Service

As of May, more than 36 million Americans, including more than 1 million North Carolinians have filed for unemployment, and it is unclear how much that number may continue to grow. We also know that economic recovery and growth will not happen overnight, and folks could remain out of work for a long time.

In order to put North Carolinians and Americans back to work, we should be innovative about the types of work opportunities we can create.

Cal's priorities for creating jobs include:

- **Expanding national service programs to help communities recover and put people to work.** During the Great Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps put more than 3 million unemployed Americans to work improving our public lands, so our country has demonstrated an ability and desire to invigorate the sense of community that comes with serving, especially in times of crisis. We can and should make efforts to do that again now. Expanding national service could be especially helpful to young Americans who will be hard hit by COVID-19 related job losses, including those graduating from high school and college into one of the worst job markets in history.

Cal supports creating a partnership with AmeriCorps and the CDC to expand our nation's public health workforce. This program would fund hundreds of thousands of new service positions dedicated to helping the country respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- Contact tracing. Cal supports Rep. David Price's bill to use AmeriCorps team members to boost our contact tracing abilities.
 - Health care and nursing home support roles.
 - Food service and distribution.
- **Create hundreds of thousands of jobs by putting people to work rebuilding our nation's infrastructure.** Just as we improved our public lands after the Great Depression, we can and should make meaningful, overdue investments in our nation's infrastructure. We have \$2 trillion in unmet infrastructure needs and millions of people out of work. Cal wants to invest in our schools and hospitals, our roads and bridges, airports, water and sewer infrastructure, mass transit, power transmission, and solar and wind energy. And importantly, Cal's also called for expanding broadband to underserved and rural communities whose lack of access to high-speed broadband has been on full display during this pandemic. This will help students learn from home, employees work from home, and patients access telemedicine from home. Read Cal's op-ed on the need for high-speed rural broadband, and his priorities for expanding access, [here](#) and [here](#).

- **Ensure that displaced workers can access education and training through North Carolina Community Colleges.** Community colleges are a critical source of education and job training for a wide range of sectors and skills, many of which our nation will need as it recovers. That's why these institutions must be a resource as we deal with the realities of COVID-19's impact on our economy and job market. It is unacceptable that Education Secretary Betsy DeVos directed millions of dollars intended for our nation's public schools and colleges toward private and religious colleges. She also used a \$350 million relief fund for schools with significant unmet needs related to COVID-19 to prop up schools with as few as 50 students "while public community colleges received as little as \$500 a student." Congress must act to ensure our community colleges are strong at this critical time.

A STRONGER SAFETY NET

Helping Families Weather The Economic Impact Of COVID-19

We know that recovery often reaches the most vulnerable populations last. One recent study suggests that the poverty rate in America could exceed the Great Recession, and could hit communities of color and children especially hard. An analysis of that study said: “It took 12 years from the start of the Great Recession for poverty rates to fall to their previous levels. If the unemployment rate averaged 24 percent for a full year — a pessimistic but conceivable outcome — the share of Americans plunged into poverty would exceed that of any of the 53 years for which there are comparable measures.”

Cal supported the CARES Act and its direct payments to families, as well as its expanded unemployment benefits, but more help is needed to help Americans weather this crisis.

Cal's priorities for helping families get through this crisis include:

- **Building on the Affordable Care Act's success.** Cal has long supported building on the Affordable Care Act's success and supports reopening the special enrollment period to make it easier for newly employed and uninsured North Carolinians to get health coverage.
- **Expanding Medicaid.** Cal's opponent, Thom Tillis, blocked Medicaid expansion in North Carolina as Speaker of the North Carolina General Assembly. Expanding Medicaid would strengthen the safety net by extending coverage to more than 634,000 North Carolinians, creating a new option for those who find themselves without insurance after losing their job, and providing more financial security to rural or underserved hospitals.
- **Expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC).** Cal supports expanding these two credits, which are an effective way to help lift people out of poverty. He supports current Senate proposals to expand the CTC by creating a new per-month, per-child credit for young children, making the credit monthly so it can benefit families over the course of the year, and making it fully refundable to help even the lowest-wage earners. Cal supports taking similar steps to improve the EITC.
- **Extending and increasing unemployment benefits.** These benefits get money directly into people's pockets when they lose jobs through no fault of their own. North Carolina's unemployment assistance today has the shortest duration of all the states and one of the lowest average per-week benefits in the nation, and could hamper our recovery.
- **Supporting families by providing workers with paid sick and family leave, and making childcare widely available and affordable.** COVID-19 has revealed many of the existing challenges workers face, including lack of paid sick and family leave and lack of affordable childcare options. Workers' ability to stay home when they're sick helps protect their pay, and their health and safety. And the ability to secure childcare when schools are closed is also critical for frontline workers. The relief law provided some expanded paid leave and family and medical leave, but Cal believes those policies should be expanded to cover more workers and should last as long as necessary to help workers weather this unprecedented crisis.

- **Increasing access to and funding for federal food assistance programs, and boosting our agriculture economy.** Following the Great Recession, food assistance programs not only helped increase food security but also led to employment gains that continued into the recovery. One study found that nearly one in five children are living in hunger during this pandemic. It is not only the right thing to do for families who are struggling, it's good for our economic recovery. Cal supports boosting funding further as an investment in families and children.

He also supports increasing support for our farmers. This pandemic has hit our agriculture economy hard, forcing many farmers to kill livestock and destroy their crops, unable to bring them to market, trade them, or distribute them to restaurants that have closed their doors. Aid for farmers has fallen short of the economic realities they face, and we need to fix that.

COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

Understanding Disparate Impacts Of COVID-19 & Addressing Barriers

Existing inequities in North Carolina's communities of color are amplified by the pandemic and make us less equipped to respond to the crisis. Due to a variety of longstanding systemic barriers, communities of color are less likely to have access to quality medical care and are more likely to have pre-existing conditions. People of color are also more likely to work frontline jobs that put them at increased risk of contracting the coronavirus. All of these factors exacerbate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities of color.

In North Carolina, Black residents make up 22 percent of the state's population, but account for nearly 35 percent of our state's COVID-19 cases and deaths. Other states are experiencing the same disturbing trend. This pattern underscores more than a failure to respond to COVID-19 — it reminds us that structural and institutional barriers and inequities, rooted in race-based discrimination, continue to harm communities of color nationwide. Lawmakers must take immediate action to address them.

Cal's priorities include:

- **Ensuring better data collection and reporting on the racial and ethnic demographics about those tested for or diagnosed with COVID-19.** Without that data “it will be difficult to provide communities of color the resources to treat and recover from coronavirus — and to diagnose it in the first place.”
- **Creating a task force to identify racial disparities in testing and diagnoses** in order to make recommendations for the distribution of aid and supplies, and a permanent task force to study and address ongoing inequities in the health care system, as called for in Sen. Kamala Harris' bill.
- **Building on the success of the Affordable Care Act to help close coverage gaps and address racial barriers that have historically made it harder for Black Americans to access health care.**
- **Securing support for community development financial institutions and other banks with histories of building relationships with and lending to minority-owned businesses.** The first round of the Paycheck Protection Program — the lending program created to help small businesses weather this crisis — largely excluded minority-owned businesses in a meaningful way. Cal is glad there were steps taken to rectify that in a later relief package, but careful oversight is needed to ensure that the funding gets to underserved, truly small businesses. Furthermore, even under normal circumstances, minority-owned businesses often face discrimination when trying to access capital. We need to fix this problem long-term.
- **Eliminating redlining and other discriminatory housing practices, and expanding access to affordable housing.** Black Americans are more likely to be in housing situations that leave them vulnerable to COVID-19 and other illnesses. That could mean living in a multigenerational home that's more crowded, or being a victim of redlining that's left them in a community with worse health and economic outcomes or closer to pollutants.

STATE & LOCAL AID FOR COMMUNITIES

Support For Those Providing Essential Services

Cal has been clear that the federal relief has not fully reached all North Carolina communities, particularly rural communities and small towns.

Cal's priorities include:

- **Expanding rural broadband and Medicaid, mentioned above.** This is particularly important for North Carolina's rural hospitals.
- **Helping states and local communities keep first-responders, police, sanitation workers and others who provide critical services on payroll at a time when we need them most.** Local communities of all sizes are struggling, and the significant revenue shortfalls they are experiencing due to COVID-19 will result in cuts to public safety, wastewater infrastructure investment, sanitation services, and local jobs. Without the federal government helping to replace lost revenue of cities and towns, cities will be hard pressed to survive. Congress must make additional funds available to cities and towns across North Carolina to protect the services they provide.
- **Supporting educators who have unique challenges as they teach remotely.** We know education makes up a large portion of North Carolina's budget, which is projected to face a multi-billion dollar shortfall due to COVID-19. We cannot let this hurt the teaching profession or the instruction of kids across our state, especially as North Carolina grapples with how to meet its constitutional obligation to deliver a sound basic education to all students. Federal support to the state is necessary to avoid teacher layoffs, funding cuts for early childhood and K-12, as well as universities and community colleges.

ACCOUNTABILITY & OVERSIGHT OF RECOVERY EFFORTS

Ensuring Recovery Funding Ends Up In Right Hands

As an Army prosecutor who took on corruption, Cal has warned repeatedly that without strong oversight and accountability measures, relief funding meant to get businesses and families back on their feet could end up in the wrong hands.

Cal supports the Paycheck Protection Program meant to help small businesses maintain their workforces during the pandemic by providing forgivable loans to small businesses, but he remains concerned about reports that funds have gone to large, publicly traded companies, while many small businesses and minority-owned businesses have been left out or are struggling to get relief. He has also expressed concern over the removal of the top watchdog tasked with oversight of coronavirus funds. And we've learned that the tax breaks within the CARES Act overwhelmingly benefit the wealthiest Americans at a \$90 billion cost to taxpayers.

History proves this oversight is critical: the Inspector General who oversaw the Troubled Asset Relief Program known as TARP found that many banks used their federal aid to make investments and repay debts or purchase other banks, while the purpose of the program was to restore health to banks so they could extend more loans.

Cal's priorities for oversight and accountability include:

- **Ensuring continued Government Accountability Office investigations and audits of coronavirus relief funds.**
- **Instating nonpartisan inspectors general across the agencies administering relief funds and insulating them from removal without cause.**
- **Ensuring the Congressional oversight panel created in the CARES Act is holding hearings, conducting proper oversight as mandated by law, and making proper referrals to law enforcement authorities when misconduct is identified.**
- **Investigating China's response and that of other countries and international organizations** in order to understand if and how the response of other countries' impacted the spread, or the U.S.'s ability to respond. Based on those findings, the U.S. can work with our allies to determine appropriate actions to hold bad actors accountable.

To that end, the Administration should share what it knew and when it knew it related to China's handling of the virus in its early days, so Congress and the American public know the full picture.