



September 24, 2020

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Renew COVID-19 relief for unemployed individuals and struggling small businesses

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

Yoga Alliance is the largest nonprofit association representing the yoga community in the United States. On behalf of over 3,600 Registered Yoga Schools (RYS) and more than 77,000 Registered Yoga Teachers (RYT) actively practicing in our country, we urge you to act immediately to pass additional COVID-19 relief legislation to ensure that yoga businesses and yoga professionals have the support they need to survive the pandemic.

The yoga community has been disproportionately devastated by the COVID-19 crisis. Early in the pandemic, most yoga studios and schools were forced to shut their doors to comply with “stay at home” orders and social distancing regulations. In many places, these businesses remain closed or are subject to such strict occupancy limitations that they cannot provide services. Further, in states and municipalities where yoga studios and schools are permitted to reopen, many yoga practitioners are understandably reluctant to return to group classes which form the core of most yoga businesses. Even where there is great demand for yoga classes to resume, adherence to baseline health and safety measures require yoga businesses to severely limit student attendance and, in many cases, prevents schools and studios from operating at all.

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are felt severely by the thousands of yoga businesses, the large majority of which are small, that cannot afford to keep their employees on payroll or their doors open, and the hundreds of thousands of yoga teachers who are unable to practice, provide services, and support themselves and their families during the crisis. What’s more, the devastation to the yoga industry, which will outlast the pandemic if Congress does not act, harms millions of Americans who rely on yoga practice for stress release, fitness, and mental, physical, and emotional health and well-being.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was a financial lifeline for the yoga community and so many others. The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which closed on August 8, 2020, provided essential emergency funds for small yoga studios and yoga teacher training programs to pay workers and keep businesses afloat. Yoga professionals were,

unfortunately, heavily represented among the 25 million Americans displaced from their jobs due to the pandemic and relying on expanded unemployment benefits paid for by the federal government that expired on July 25, 2020. This included the \$600 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) benefit to supplement traditional unemployment payments and the creation of Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) to provide unemployment compensation for self-employed workers.

While these critical aid programs have expired, the conditions that made them so necessary carries on and the yoga community is at risk. **Legislation must be passed immediately to renew CARES Act benefits for yoga professionals and small businesses who make sacrifices to protect the mental, physical, and spiritual health and well-being of the American public.**

Specifically, the next COVID-19 relief bill should:

- Extend PUA and FPUC unemployment benefits for as long as necessary to ensure that all workers who have lost their jobs have the support, they need to survive the pandemic.
- Authorize more technical assistance and/or financial resources to states to ensure efficient and reliable administration of expanded unemployment insurance programs, given the significant problems states have faced in implementing the CARES Act; and
- Ensure continued relief for small businesses through extension of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) or a similar financing mechanism for small businesses, such as the RESTART Act or similar legislation.

As the overwhelming impacts of COVID-19 continue to be felt across the United States, it is critical that our federal government continue to support struggling workers and businesses in the yoga industry and across our economy. With your support, the yoga community will be well positioned to survive this crisis and, as the pandemic eases, to continue to provide millions of Americans access to a practice that improves their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Sincerely,



Shannon E. Roche
President & Chief Executive Officer
Yoga Alliance