

**Opening Statement**  
**JEC Hearing on “Reducing Uncertainty and Restoring Confidence**  
**during the Coronavirus Recession”**  
**July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, 3:00pm**

Thank you, Vice Chair Beyer, and thank you for presiding for the first time as Vice Chair over this very timely hearing.

The pandemic and the havoc it wreaked on American lives and the economy is unlike anything in recent memory. In response, Congress took unprecedented action that, along with Federal Reserve initiatives, helped stabilize the economy.

Beyond the legislative changes that we enacted, existing features of the tax code and traditional safety net programs like unemployment insurance are helping families that lose income and jobs as the pandemic ravages our communities. Known as “automatic stabilizers,” these policy provisions operate simultaneously with other actions taken by state and local governments and Congress.

But it concerns me that many want to extend automatic stabilizers, as that would override the deliberation that Americans expect of their elected representatives and could hinder the economic recovery.

Mandating more spending in the form of expanded automatic stabilizers—ones that turn on and off based on macroeconomic conditions—contributes to one of the main problems of federal spending: that it is overly automated, causing legislators to actively manage less and less of the budget as time goes on.

Reducing legislative discretion increases costs, reduces our ability to control the national debt, and diminishes policymakers’ ability to tailor responses to the specifics of a future crisis.

The extraordinary measures we enacted initially were warranted but are not strategies we should continue to pursue now. They are unsustainable over the indefinite course of the pandemic. Today we must pivot to helping our communities reopen safely.

Our focus going forward should be on policies that pave the way for American recovery and allow businesses to adapt and reopen as safely and quickly as possible, while giving their employees and the customers they serve confidence in the procedures that are in place.

There are multiple actions Congress could take to strengthen the U.S. economy and hasten the recovery. We should examine and remove the regulations currently in place that are holding back businesses and workers from responding more dynamically to changing economic conditions, and we should consider how Congress can encourage Americans to save more so they can be better prepared for future crises.

Our efforts should include leveraging charitable giving by reforming its inequitable treatment in the tax code. This reform could bolster our COVID-19 response, as we discussed in our last hearing.

Our efforts should also include sun-setting all federal regulations that were waived during the pandemic. In a letter to the recently confirmed Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Russell Vought, several of my Senate colleagues and I asked that these waived regulations go through the regulatory review process. This process would determine whether these regulations should be maintained, modified, or repealed. We noted that the absence of the waived regulations improved COVID-19 response efforts, and allowed doctors to practice medicine across state lines and provide telehealth services for Medicare patients.

Now also seems like a particularly good time to pass the *Working Families Flexibility Act*, which would allow more employers to offer workers a choice between overtime pay and paid time off. This could help workers take time off if they become ill or need to care

for loved ones, while also giving employers another tool to help weather the disruptive effects of the pandemic on payrolls and schedules.

Whatever actions we take, we must not lose faith in our ability as a deliberative body to represent our constituents and to consider and create policy solutions tailored to the crises our country faces. And we must remember that policies should support the resiliency of the American people in the face of adversity rather than make them more dependent upon government.

Thank you again, Vice Chair Beyer, for calling this important hearing, and thanks to the witnesses for being here today. I look forward to your testimony and a worthwhile discussion.