

PRESIDENT

Douglas Preston

VICE PRESIDENT

Monique Truong

TREASURER

Peter Petre

SECRETARY

Rachel Vail

MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Rich Benjamin
Amy Bloom
Mary Bly
Alexander Chee
Pat Cummings
Sylvia Day
W. Ralph Eubanks
Peter Getthers
Lauren Groff
Tayari Jones
Min Jin Lee
Nicholas Lemann
Steven Levy
John R. MacArthur
D. T. Max
Daniel Okrent
Michelle Richmond
Julia Sanches
James Shapiro
Hampton Sides
T.J. Stiles
Jonathan Taplin
Danielle Trussoni
Nicholas Weinstock

**EX-OFFICIO & HONORARY
MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

Roger Angell
Roy Blount Jr.
Barbara Taylor Bradford
Robert A. Caro
Susan Cheever
Anne Edwards
James Gleick
Erica Jong
Stephen Manes
Victor S. Navasky
Sidney Offit
Mary Pope Osborne
Letty Cottin Pogrebin
Roxana Robinson
Jean Strouse
Nick Taylor
Scott Turow

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Sherman Alexie
Judy Blume
Jennifer Egan
Louise Erdrich
Annette Gordon-Reed
CJ Lyons
Frederic Martini
Cathleen Schine
Meg Wolitzer

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mary Rasenberger

November 17, 2020

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Grassley:

We are writing to urge you to include relief for non-traditional and freelance workers in the upcoming stimulus bill. As you know, the majority's current proposed bill does not extend the CARES Act's Pandemic Unemployment Assistance ("PUA") benefits. These benefits, which have been critical to the survival of non-traditional and freelance workers, are set to expire on December 31, 2020. Forgoing the extension of PUA for non-traditional workers when over eleven million Americans have been infected with Covid19, more than a thousand dying each day, and when additional relief is already past due, would be catastrophic for all Americans, but especially for the tens of millions of non-traditional workers, freelancers, and self-employed individuals, who are facing an untenable financial situation due to pandemic-related business closures and employment disruptions.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, an estimated one-third of U.S. workers are freelance workers either through primary or secondary jobs. The Freelancers Union estimates that these workers contribute \$1 trillion to the U.S economy. As self-employed individuals whose earnings are reported on 1099s, these workers are not entitled to traditional unemployment compensation under state and federal laws. If Congress allows their PUA benefits to lapse, non-traditional workers will not have any support. Already, scores of such workers have exhausted their PUA benefits and are using their dwindling savings simply to survive.

Congress can avert the catastrophe awaiting tens of millions of American non-traditional workers by extending PUA at least until January 31, 2021, as set forth in the HEROES Act passed by the House, and preferably until the worst of the pandemic is over and all Americans can get back to work. In addition, Congress must address the mixed-income earner gap, which has led to the millions of non-traditional workers with some W-2 employment being ineligible for PUA benefits or receiving minimal benefits. The pending Mixed Earner Pandemic Employment (S.4222), offers to remedy this gap by allowing individuals earning at least \$7,250 per year from self-employment income to receive PUA benefits. We are urging you to include the provisions of the Mixed Earner Pandemic Employment Act into the next relief package so that the mixed-income earning workers who have been able to recover only a small portion of their earnings through unemployment, and have been ineligible for PUA benefits—and

consequently relying on savings to sustain themselves and their families—can finally get the relief they desperately need.

We thank you for your leadership, and hope that the Senate will keep the well-being of America's hardworking, non-traditional workers in mind as it deliberates the next relief package.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Rasenberger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mary Rasenberger
Executive Director
The Authors Guild