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April 22, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer,

We write today regarding the filibuster and the ability of the 117th Congress to deliver on an agenda that centers on the needs of everyday people across America. Despite the extraordinary devastating pandemic and unprecedented economic pain, millions turned out to deliver control of the federal government to Democrats with the expectation that we will enact legislation that will have a meaningful impact on the lives of our community members. Democrats now control the House, Senate, and White House because of the courage, fierce organizing, and hope of millions of Americans. It is our duty to deliver on our promises to pass bold legislation and do what is necessary to advance our fight for justice and economic prosperity.

In today's hyper-partisan climate, there is simply no avenue for bold legislation that meets the needs of everyday Americans without ending the filibuster. Just last month, we witnessed one of this Congress and President Biden's core promises, increasing the federal minimum wage to \$15, fail to be included in the American Rescue Plan — a \$1.9 trillion package that is necessary for combatting the health and economic crises borne out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite strong outreach to our Republican colleagues, the American Rescue Plan was passed with not a single Republican voting in favor of the legislation.<sup>1</sup> A majority of Americans agree that passing this relief package is a necessity, therefore, the Senate Democrats and the Biden administration were committed to delivering a comprehensive relief package to the American people. Yet, in order to advance this critical legislation, they were left with no choice but to rely on the reconciliation process to bypass the filibuster and the need for 60 votes. Our efforts to enact a bold agenda should not be stalled by Republican obstruction. The path forward in the fight for \$15, voting rights, climate and environmental justice, gun violence prevention, immigration reform, worker protections, LGBTQ equality, and reforming our criminal-legal system will likely be further obstructed — unless we end the filibuster.

This is an existential moment for our country. We must end the gridlock that has become common practice in Washington and govern boldly and transformatively to improve the lives of millions of people, children, and families all across the country. For too many people in our communities, their very survival is at stake. Republicans are well aware that removing barriers to passing legislation will have a transformational impact

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<sup>1</sup> Erica Werner. Biden \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief bill nears finish line in Congress. The Washington Post: March 9, 2021.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2021/03/09/biden-stimulus-house-passage/>

on these communities. It is why they are passing legislation at the state level across the country in an attempt to suppress the votes of Black, brown and Indigenous people. It is also why they are preventing the Senate from advancing critical legislation that can meet the needs of the people we represent.

This is not the first time many in Congress have called for the elimination of the filibuster. Senate leaders from both sides of the aisle have tried and failed to remove the filibuster. The filibuster has been a key tool in preventing progress towards racial justice. It is a relic of Jim Crow-era policies that continue to preclude our nation's efforts to fulfill a foundational promise laid out in the constitution to "establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity." From voting rights to gun violence prevention, the filibuster continues to deny justice and racial equity to communities of color and blocks meaningful legislation from moving forward.<sup>2</sup>

We urge Senate Democrats to do what it takes to pass an agenda that meets the needs of everyday people, including eliminating the filibuster. We understand the balance of power and share a desire to maintain a healthy political environment through bipartisanship. However, what has become patently clear is that we cannot let a procedural tool that can be abolished stand in the way of justice, prosperity, and equity. We simply cannot afford such a catastrophic compromise. We must legislate towards a better, more just America—and that requires us to do what's necessary to deliver for the communities that we all represent.

Thank you for your leadership during this critical moment for our country and for our world, and we look forward to continued partnership in our work for the people.

Sincerely,



CORI BUSH  
Member of Congress



JASON CROW  
Member of Congress



PRAMILA JAYAPAL  
Member of Congress



SEAN CASTEN  
Member of Congress

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<sup>2</sup>Alex Baptiste, Dr. Stephany Rose Spaulding, and Laura Williamson. End the Filibuster: How a Relic of Jim Crow Could Block Our Progressive Agenda. Demos, Just Democracy, Truth & Conciliation. March 9, 2021

<https://www.demos.org/policy-briefs/end-filibuster-how-relic-jim-crow-could-block-our-progressive-agenda>; Rashad Robinson. The Senate filibuster has a racist past and present. End it so America can move forward. USA Today: March 1, 2021.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2021/03/01/end-filibuster-make-progress-race-voting-guns-health-care-column/6779720002/>

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cc:  
Members of the Senate Democratic Caucus