

## Philadelphia Worker Relief Fund

The **Philadelphia Worker Relief Fund** will provide direct cash assistance (via a debit card or other method) to workers and families ineligible for federal and state COVID-19 relief programs. The City of Philadelphia will partner with Open Society Foundations, regional philanthropic organizations, and trusted local community-based organizations to distribute funds to households in need.

Recognizing the dire economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state and federal governments have provided for direct relief programs to impacted households. Those left out of federal and state relief represent a critical part of the city's workforce and are essential workers on the frontlines of the pandemic such as domestic workers, farmworkers, home health aides, and food delivery workers who are key to the recovery of our neighborhoods. Many of these workers are excluded from receiving this aid, including:

- Certain cash workers who have been denied all other benefits;
- Workers who pay taxes using a Taxpayer Identification Number, many of whom are undocumented immigrants;
- Family members or those who live with workers described above;

The lack of COVID-19 relief resources increases economic insecurity in communities with the highest prevalence of low-wage jobs and food insecurity and among workers who are excluded from many workplace protections and government services. The crisis has shown how important it is that all workers, especially essential workers on the frontline of the pandemic, get the support they and their families need to survive, stay safe and healthy.

Immigrants families and mixed-status households are particularly likely to be left behind by aid programs. Nearly one in five Philadelphia workers is an immigrant with undocumented immigrants representing 25 percent of the immigrant population (or over 50,000 individuals)<sup>i</sup>.

Now is the time for local government, community-based partners and philanthropy to work together to ensure economic relief reaches workers and families who may be left out of the federal Covid-19 relief efforts. This effort is critical to the resilience and recovery of the Philadelphia.

To fill the gaps left by state and federal relief efforts and provide immediate financial assistance to excluded Philadelphia families, the **Philadelphia Worker Relief Fund** will:

- Provide one-time direct cash payments of \$800 to Philadelphia families experiencing COVID-19-related financial distress who are not eligible for federal and state direct relief payments or benefits

- Work with local community-based organizations with deep relationships and trust in target communities to reach households in need, verify their eligibility, and distribute unique codes eligible applicants use to receive funds. Partners will also help families navigate available local resources for food, supplies, and services.
- Partner with the Alia app, powered by the National Domestic Workers Alliance Labs, to disburse funds quickly and efficiently through a digital transfer or a gift card
- Coordinate fundraising efforts and leverage philanthropic support through the Mayor's Fund for Philadelphia.

## **Cash Assistance**

Cash assistance is a fundamental building block toward the resilience, recovery and future of our cities. The federal government itself has deployed cash assistance as an immediate relief response by providing "stimulus" checks to certain U.S. households for individuals earning up to \$75,000 or \$150,000 for a married couple. Additionally, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services released an Emergency Cash Assistance program on May 11<sup>th</sup> for those who have lost income as a result of COVID-19 using TANF funds which has a variety of restrictions, including not being applicable to undocumented residents.

In a time of crisis the ability to get direct cash assistance into the hands of our neighbors who are left out of government sponsored relief and who may, due to their immigration status, be uncomfortable taking advantage of other forms of relief such as City's sponsored food distribution programs is critical.

Philadelphia lacks a consistent, tested and trusted mechanism to administer direct payment at scale, including to an immigrant community. Cities and states across the country, and in response to the COVID-19 crisis are launching direct cash assistance programs such as The [Angelenos Card](#) launched by Mayor Garcetti using philanthropic funds and providing thousands of LA residents not eligible for federal funds or still waiting for their "stimulus" checks with pre-paid debit cards. Open Society Foundations has also partnered with [New York City](#), Chicago, Atlanta and Washington D.C. to provide emergency cash assistance.

As residents we will never be safe from COVID-19 without a safety net for everyone it affects. There's no substitute for a real safety net, but we can help save lives by putting the building blocks for a real recovery and safety net in place.

## **Philanthropic Support**

The goal of the Philadelphia Worker Relief Fund is to raise \$3 million in order to provide support to 3,750 families. The Fund has already received \$1.25 million in philanthropic funding commitments, including support from the Open Society Foundations and the Alfred and Mary Douty Foundation. The Fund will continue to fundraise to close the gap in the

nation's safety net and provide cash payments to families left out of federal and state relief programs.

## **Partners**

The Philadelphia Worker Relief Fund will be hosted by the Mayor's Fund for the City of Philadelphia. The Mayor's Fund will leverage philanthropic funding to partner with 14 community-based organizations to connect to individuals who are not eligible for other assistance programs. These trusted organizations are in excluded communities across the city and serve diverse populations. They will assist families to receive their payments through Alia, an online platform powered by the National Domestic Workers Alliance Labs that is designed to reach workers who face barriers to receiving benefits.

The Philadelphia Worker Relief Fund was established with the critical support and advocacy of the Coalition to Respect Every Worker, a coalition of worker-focused organizations composed of legal aid groups, non-profits, and labor unions.

---

<sup>i 1</sup> The Pew Charitable Trusts, "Philadelphia's Immigrants: Who They Are and How They Are Changing the City." June 2018. [https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/2018/06/pri\\_philadelphias\\_immigrants.pdf](https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/2018/06/pri_philadelphias_immigrants.pdf)