



# WE WORK FOR HEALTH

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## APRIL 2020 NEWSLETTER

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**WASHINGTON**

# Federal Update: COVID-19 Emergency Funding

As COVID-19 has emerged to radically reshape daily life in the US, Congress moved quickly to pass three separate funding packages to shift emergency relief funding to states that have been overwhelmed with a surge of needs from vulnerable residents. A brief review of Congressional action to-date is as follows:

- On Friday, March 6th, the Coronavirus Preparedness Response Supplemental Appropriations Act was passed to help backfill emergency needs experienced by state departments of health across the country. Washington state received \$11.5m of these funds. The money supported lab testing, isolation and quarantine costs, public space decontamination, and enhanced surveillance needs for tracking the spread of the virus. This bill also included \$3 billion to stimulate new vaccine research across the US.
- On Tuesday, March 17th, Congress passed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which provided emergency funding for state unemployment insurance programs, food benefit assistance, and a number of provisions related to expanding and funding emergency paid sick and family medical leave. We have our own Senator Patty Murray to thank for championing many of the provisions in this bill related to paid sick leave funding and tax credits.
- Finally, on March 29th, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Recovery (CARES) Act, a \$2 trillion response bill to assist American businesses, health-care providers, state and local governments, and families reeling from COVID-induced reductions in economic activity – sought to shore up and incentivize business retention of employees amidst the crisis, provide direct payments to American taxpayers to stimulate continued flow of consumer dollars into the economy, and provide further assistance to states, hospitals, and other critical public health infrastructure needs to combat the spread of the virus.

The advent of COVID-19 on the world stage will animate policy outcomes and radically reframe “business as usual” in the other Washington for the foreseeable future. Here at We Work for Health, we’ll do our best to keep you apprised of the latest and provide avenues to weigh in meaningfully to impact the course of the debate as it moves forward. Many of the public policy conversations we seek to facilitate around access to medicine and how to sustain the pipeline of new therapeutic innovations are now more salient than ever. Every American is now “waiting for the cure” – sharing a thread of existential concern with many patients in our country who continue to fight tough battles with autoimmune deficiencies, cancer, rare diseases, or any number of other challenging conditions that stress families’ sense of health and wellbeing. Our WWFH-WA team wishes you a safe and healthy physical distancing month ahead, **Please don’t hesitate to reach out directly to: [max@desimonecg.com](mailto:max@desimonecg.com) (206) 963 - 6195 with any questions, comments, or concerns.**

# Local Life Science Innovate around COVID-19 Response:



Last week, Amgen and Adaptive Biotechnologies have announced a collaboration aimed at helping address and potentially prevent future spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The intent of this partnership is to marry critical technologies from two world-class therapeutic innovators: Adaptive Bio's expertise in immune profiling and Amgen's expertise in genetic immunology antibody engineering and manufacturing. Amgen and Adaptive Bio are focused on making progress as quickly as possible, striving to strike a balance between discovering high quality antibodies as therapeutic candidates and getting a prospective treatment developed as quickly as possible.

This new working relationship will focus developing "neutralizing antibody" candidates derived from the blood of patients who are actively fighting or have recently recovered from COVID-19. In practice, this means understanding the immunological composition of people whose bodies have fended off the Coronavirus and replicating their strongest immune defenses into patients who have not yet been infected. Harlan Robbins, co-founder and chief scientific officer of Seattle-based Adaptive Bio, states "The key to neutralizing antibodies is they have to be able to work alone on in small groups." Simply put, a lab-developed antibody or antibodies would have to do the job of what hundreds of naturally occurring antibodies would normally do in a typical immune system. As Robbins puts it, they are searching for the "Michael Jordan" of antibodies, which can prove to be very difficult. He adds, "You basically have to scout every high school basketball player at the same time." Despite this massive undertaking both companies seem hopeful these efforts will prove efficacious.

While COVID-19 has been found to mutate at a much slower rate than other viruses such as HIV and Influenza, it is still expected to change over time, so an effective therapeutic discovered today might not work against a future iteration of the virus. In anticipation of this, the companies say they may not be just looking for one super antibody, but rather a cocktail of two or three in order to neutralize multiple strains of the virus at once. Amgen and Adaptive Bio are committed to applying their resources and expertise to these long-term solutions. While they don't know exact numbers yet, they will have the ability to scale relatively quickly when it comes time for mass production and distribution. "We view this as complimentary to other efforts going on in the industry and not as a competition" stated David M. Reese, Executive Vice President of Research and Development at Amgen, "This is an all-hands-on-deck moment."

# Partner Spotlight:



## COVID-19 Resource and Information Guide

The emergency “Stay Home Stay Healthy” order has impacted us all differently – and mandatory physical distancing, while effective in slowing disease progression, as demonstrated by relative flattening of infection curves in Washington and California, carries with it a significant, but sometimes invisible toll on our mental health and well-being.

To address this, the National Association on Mental Illness of Washington has compiled a comprehensive FAQ document that covers best practices for enduring physical distancing, organizational resources, and other program offerings to help community members with their mental health needs through this challenging time. [Click here to view this resource!](#)

NAMI-WA has also purchased zoom licenses for its affiliates across the state to ensure critical program access remains viable and accessible throughout the state. Staff have been working hard to ensure NAMI signature program leaders have the online training tools they need to pivot to virtual offerings.

A big thanks to the NAMI team for all their hard work!