

Southern states face immense challenges from COVID-19

- Compared to the national average, the South's population appears to be at greater risk of economic fall-out from Coronavirus due to:
 - Higher shares of populations most at risk, such as elderly residents and residents with self-care and/or independent living difficulty disabilities.
 - Lower rates of paid sick leave coverage.
 - Lower rates of health coverage due to failure to expand Medicaid.
 - Fewer resources to navigate the crisis.
 - Weak coverage levels of public benefits.
- State public assistance programs lack the scope and capacity to address the potential \$577 billion decline in wages and salaries earned in seven industries most likely to be damaged by COVID-19 in the South.
- The lack of state proactive economic policies coupled with the pre-emption of local policies, such as municipal minimum wages and paid leave, places Southern states at risk.

Southern leaders must take action

- Expanding the scope and coverage of unemployment insurance, direct income assistance, and public health coverage can lead to immediate economic assistance, even in the face of crisis. These actions are complements to federal actions that must be taken.
- Each state in the region has closed schools and imposed gathering restrictions; however, states in the South have yet to introduce comprehensive plans to mediate the economic damage of the pandemic. Immediate actions are:
 1. **Unemployment Insurance: Raise benefits and coverage to minimize unemployment and lost wages and salaries**
 2. **TANF block grants: Increase income support to the non-employed**
 3. **Medicaid: Expand public health coverage to promote public health**

Read the full report with data [here](#).