

**April 13, 2020**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL URGES FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE EMERGENCY STIMULUS PAYMENTS GO TO FAMILIES**

**Chicago** — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today joined a bipartisan coalition of 25 attorneys general in calling on the U.S. Department of the Treasury to take immediate action to ensure that billions of dollars in emergency stimulus payments authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) go to American families and not debt collectors.

Congress passed the CARES Act three weeks ago to provide direct and immediate economic relief to all individuals and businesses affected by the COVID-19 public health crisis. Unlike other government programs, the CARES Act does not explicitly designate these emergency stimulus payments as being exempt from garnishment from creditors. In [a letter](#) to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, Raoul and the coalition ask the agency to protect CARES Act funds, like other government relief programs, and ensure funds go where they were originally intended.

“The billions of dollars appropriated by Congress to help hard-working Americans during this time of crisis should not be subject to garnishment,” Raoul said. “I urge the Department of the Treasury to take action to ensure this money will go to the individuals and families who desperately need it – not to debt collectors.”

The CARES Act authorizes the Treasury Department to issue emergency stimulus payments of up to \$1,200 for eligible adults and up to \$500 for eligible children. Similar government relief programs intended to provide for Americans’ basic needs — like Social Security, disability, and veterans’ payments — all are statutorily exempt from garnishment, a legal mechanism that typically involves the freezing of funds in a bank account by creditors or debt collectors. The CARES Act does not explicitly designate these emergency stimulus payments as being exempt from garnishment, allowing debt collectors to potentially benefit before consumers.

In the letter, Raoul and the coalition urge Secretary Mnuchin to use his authority under the CARES Act to stave off economic uncertainty for millions by immediately issuing regulations or guidance explicitly designating CARES Act benefit payments as funds that are exempt from garnishment. The attorneys general assert that in the weeks immediately following the passage of the CARES Act, the Treasury Department has stated that Americans will see fast and direct relief in the form of Economic Impact Payments, and the coalition urges the department to ensure that Americans are able to retain that monetary relief.

Joining Raoul in the letter are the attorneys general of California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin, as well as the Hawaii Office of Consumer Protection