

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

March 21, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump and Vice President Pence:

We appreciate the work that has been done so far to ensure that the states, local governments, and tribal organizations we represent in the United State Senate get the supplies and equipment they need to respond to and prepare for the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). On February 28, 2020, the first patient in the United States died due to COVID-19, and since then many more have died and thousands have tested positive for the virus. More widespread testing will hopefully provide a clearer picture of the true prevalence.

State, local, territorial, and tribal public health agencies are leading the response to the pandemic. These departments know their communities well and are making the best decisions they can to keep their citizens safe. However, our constituents working as health care providers and front line responders in hospitals, public health departments, and throughout their communities report the health care system is woefully under-resourced, especially in our rural, underserved areas and minority communities that are often overlooked. This problem is most acute with shortages of supplies and equipment that are desperately needed to test for and treat COVID-19 patients.

On the morning of March 16, 2020, President Trump told the nation’s governors on a phone call to get supplies themselves. Specifically, the President said, “respirators, ventilators, all of the equipment — try getting it yourselves. We will be backing you, but try getting it yourselves. Point of sales, much better, much more direct if you can get it yourself.”

Given the scale of the threat that COVID-19 poses to public health, responding to the outbreak is placing substantial strain on state, local, territorial, and tribal public health agencies’ already-limited resources. Furthermore, states and health care facilities who are trying to do as the President says and “get it yourself,” find that the supply simply is not available. We urge you to be proactive and utilize the powers that you invoked on March 18, 2020, under the Defense Production Act (DPA) to mobilize private industry to manufacture the supplies and equipment needed to address this crisis.

Additionally, the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) centers in every state and Puerto Rico represent an existing, high-quality network connecting small and medium manufacturers with technical experts to develop strategies for innovation, optimizing supply chains, and improving efficiency and productivity. Given that efficiency, productivity, and supply chain management are critical for rapidly manufacturing much-needed medical

equipment, we urge that you utilize the capabilities and connections of the MEP network to expedite the search for excess manufacturing capacity.

We urge you to within 3 days, provide the members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives the answers to the following questions in a manner that does not compromise national security:

- 1) What is the current status of supplies in the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) that may be used in the COVID-19 response? Please include data on which, and the number of, pharmaceuticals, personal protective equipment, and any other medical supplies currently in the SNS that may be utilized in the response.
- 2) What is the current nationwide status of supplies and equipment available to test for and treat COVID-19 and what is the quantity of supplies and equipment the administration has determined is necessary to fully provide states, local, and tribal organizations with what they need throughout the length of the pandemic? Please include the quantity of personal protective equipment (including N95 Respirators and Surgical Masks, gloves, gowns, face shields, eye protection), testing supplies (including reagents and swabs), and ventilators that is currently available and the quantity needed throughout the length of the pandemic.
- 3) What is the current total nationwide COVID-19 diagnostic testing capacity for public health, commercial, and academic laboratories per day? What is your plan to increase testing capacity? When will testing capacity be sufficient to be fully responsive to the current outbreak?
- 4) What is your plan to mobilize the private industry to manufacture supplies and equipment under the DPA and what is your timeline on invoking that power?
- 5) What is your plan for using the MEP network to identify manufacturers with excess or idle production capacity? What are your plans for organizing MEP and National Institute of Standards and Technology expertise and resources to optimize production?

While Congress has provided supplemental funding for state, local, territorial, and tribal public health agencies, the need for additional support across the nation remains high. The large magnitude of this crisis requires an even larger response from our national leaders. Americans depend on this. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Senator Michael F. Bennet

Senator Charles E. Schumer

Senator Amy Klobuchar

Senator Maggie Hassan

Senator Tammy Duckworth

Senator Patty Murray

Senator Ron Wyden	Senator Martin Heinrich
Senator Bernard Sanders	Senator Chris Van Hollen
Senator Doug Jones	Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Senator Mazie Hirono	Senator Tim Kaine
Senator Tina Smith	Senator Richard Blumenthal
Senator Benjamin L. Cardin	Senator Jacky Rosen
Senator Elizabeth Warren	Senator Robert P. Casey
Senator Gary C. Peters	Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
Senator Robert Menendez	Senator Joe Machin III
Senator Jeffrey A. Merkley	Senator Kamala D. Harris
Senator Tammy Baldwin	Senator Sherrod Brown
Senator Dianne Feinstein	Senator Catherine Cortez Masto
Senator Jack Reed	Senator Brian Schatz
Senator Christopher A. Coons	Senator Richard J. Durbin
Senator Thomas R. Carper	Senator Mark R. Warner
Senator Cory A. Booker	Senator Edward J. Markey
Senator Christopher S. Murphy	Senator Maria Cantwell
Senator Angus S. King, Jr	Senator Tom Udall
Senator Patrick Leahy	Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Senator Jon Tester	Senator Debbie Stabenow
Senator Kyrsten Sinema	