



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2020

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

The nation is in the midst of a historic public health emergency. As of today, nearly 11,000 Americans have been infected by the novel coronavirus and over 150 have died. Public health experts warn that with a pandemic of this nature we are in a race against time, with the outbreak expected to worsen over the coming days and weeks, threatening to overwhelm our hospital capacity.¹ The nature of this public health emergency demands an unprecedented Federal response to expedite the building of hospital capacity, expand the availability of ventilators, and increase medical staffing to support State and local efforts to not only contain and mitigate risks but manage the anticipated influx of Americans needing hospital care. While the Committee lauds the signing of the Defense Production Act to allow the Federal government to order American industry to produce critically needed medical equipment, more must be done. As such, on behalf of the Democratic Members of the Committee on Homeland Security, I call on you to direct all Federal agencies to not only prioritize their resources towards responding to the outbreak but urge you to immediately do the following:

- 1) direct the Departments of Defense and Health and Human Services to dedicate the Federal government's considerable purchasing power towards acquiring a sufficient number of ventilators that are expected to be needed in short order;
- 2) direct the Department of Homeland Security, acting through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to play a central role in managing logistics for delivering critical medical supplies and resources to State and local jurisdictions;
- 3) direct the White House Coronavirus Task Force to formally add FEMA Administrator Peter Gaynor to the task force;
- 4) direct the Department of Homeland Security to evaluate continuity of operations for critical infrastructure as the pandemic worsens; and

¹ Maxouris, C & Yan, H, [US coronavirus death toll tops 100 as doctors say hospitals aren't prepared for a continuing surge, CNN, 3/18/20. URL: https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/18/health/us-coronavirus-case-updates-wednesday/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/18/health/us-coronavirus-case-updates-wednesday/index.html)

- 5) direct the Army Corps of Engineers to suspend the southwest border project to dedicate its resources to the building of temporary hospitals and infrastructure needed to respond to the coronavirus.

The Democratic Members of the Committee on Homeland Security are deeply concerned that we do not have enough of the medical supplies to treat the anticipated surge in the number of infected Americans. Other countries around the world that are also experiencing the pandemic are reporting shortages. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is responsible for protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services.

During a fast-moving situation and exponentially spreading disease outbreak, time is of the essence. Americans are doing their part, at great economic and personal expense, and are “socially distancing” to buy time for the Federal government to build capacity in our public health system, develop a treatment, and hopefully a vaccine. Now is the time for you, as the elected leader of this great nation, to provide the leadership that this historic moment demands by harnessing the resources and capabilities of the Federal government.

We stand ready to assist on behalf of our constituents and the American people.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson

On behalf of:

Sheila Jackson Lee

James R. Langevin

Cedric L. Richmond

Donald M. Payne Jr.

Kathleen M. Rice

J. Louis Correa

Xochitl Torres Small

Max Rose

Lauren Underwood

Elissa Slotkin

Emanuel Cleaver

Al Green

Yvette D. Clarke

Dina Titus

Bonnie Watson Coleman

Nannette Diaz Barragán

Val Butler Demings