

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 6, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pence
Vice President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20501

Director Robert R. Redfield, MD
Director of the Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention
1600 Clifton Rd.
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Vice President Pence and Director Redfield,

We write today to urge the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) to include first responders, including firefighters and police, in the top priority for testing for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (“COVID-19”).

On March 24, 2020 CDC updated their interim guidance “Evaluating and Testing Persons for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)” to reflect three priority and one non-priority populations for COVID-19 testing, with the top priority including “symptomatic healthcare workers.”¹ We agree that testing our frontline healthcare workers is a critical top priority for management and control of the current outbreak and the health of our society over all. Similarly, testing of symptomatic emergency responders will ensure our communities are protected during one of their most vulnerable times.

While further CDC guidance also allows that “...decisions about testing are at the discretion of state and local health departments and/or individual clinicians,”² the authority of the CDC as our nation’s leader in infectious disease mitigation, combined with the limited number of tests available throughout the U.S., makes CDC testing prioritization guidelines highly influential in the steps taken by our local authorities.

For states across the western U.S., wildfire season is just beginning. In recent years, states from California, to New Mexico, to Colorado have seen record-setting devastation from wildfires. For these communities, firefighters at the frontline of wildfire response are critical to their survival. We are already hearing concern from our local and state entities that firefighters are having to self-quarantine out of fear of spreading COVID-19, resulting in our local entities being short-staffed just as their service is most needed.

Equivalently, police departments across our nation are on the frontlines of encouraging and managing our communities’ Emergency Declarations and social distancing efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As with each day in every community, these emergency personnel are pivotal to the success of these measures and the ultimate health and cohesion of our society.

¹ “Evaluating and Testing Persons for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).” CDC. 24 March 2020.

² “Testing for COVID-19.” CDC. 21 March 2020.

While every effort should be made to ensure wide-spread access to testing for every member of our public, prioritizing first responders for testing during our current time of testing shortages would give the assurance needed for these workers to either continue with self-quarantine measures or return to the invaluable work for which they are desperately needed.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter and ask for an immediate reply.

Sincerely,

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Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Doug Lamborn".

Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Harley Rouda".

Harley Rouda
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.". The signature is stylized with a large "G" and "C".

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jamie Raskin".

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ilhan Omar". The signature is stylized with a large "I" and "O".

Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jahana Hayes".

Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress



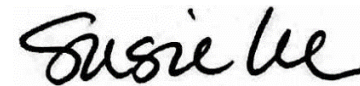
Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress




Ken Buck
Member of Congress



Susie Lee
Member of Congress



Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Xochitl Torres Small
Member of Congress



Elaine Luria
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



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Kathleen M Rice
Member of Congress

Kim Schrier, M.D
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress