

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 6, 2020

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

As the government works to protect Americans from COVID-19, we must ensure that we provide first responders with the resources they need to keep our communities safe during this pandemic. Reports from across the country indicate that first responders do not have the personal protective equipment (PPE) that they need to keep themselves safe as they respond to emergencies during this crisis. As members of the Law Enforcement Caucus and the Fire Services Caucus, we urge you to lead a strong, coordinated federal effort to support our first responders and address this national shortage of PPE.

First responders, including firefighters, emergency medical services personnel, and law enforcement officers, answer the call of duty by showing up to work at emergency scenes where they could be exposed to COVID-19. This work inherently requires close contact with potentially infected and contagious individuals, and it is often first responders who transport these individuals to health care facilities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that first responders who anticipate coming into contact with persons with confirmed or possible COVID-19 utilize PPE, like respirators, gowns, eye protection, and gloves, in these circumstances.¹ However, the national shortage of PPE has left fire companies and police departments across the country struggling to access this critical equipment. A United States Conference of Mayors survey recently found that 88.2 percent of cities lack an adequate supply of PPE to protect first responders.²

The dangerous consequences of this equipment shortage are clear. When first responders are exposed to or become infected with COVID-19, they are often unable to work for at least 14 days. Across the country, first responders are being taken off of the front lines in large numbers because they lack the necessary PPE and have been exposed to the virus. Over 17 percent of the New York City Fire Department and 13 percent of the New York City Police Department are

¹ *Interim Guidance for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Systems and 911 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) for COVID-19 in the United States*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (updated March 10, 2020), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html>.

² *Shortages of COVID-19 Emergency Equipment in U.S. Cities A Survey of the Nation's Mayors*, The United States Conference of Mayors (March 27, 2020), <https://www.usmayors.org/issues/covid-19/equipment-survey/>.

already out sick.³ Ensuring the health, safety, and availability of first responders is vital to our communities – any staffing shortage of emergency personnel impacts all of us. If our first responders are sidelined, our communities immediately become less safe and less resilient.

We appreciate that the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act included \$100 million for Assistance to Firefighters Grants to help first responders during this crisis. However, this money is insufficient to provide first responders with the protection that they require. To date, first responders have been unable to purchase sufficient supplies of PPE during this pandemic. Fire, police, and emergency medical services departments are being told by their usual suppliers not to expect resupply for months. The American Medical Association, American Hospital Association, and American Nurses Association recently stated in a letter to you that even with the infusion of supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile and other federal resources, there will not be enough equipment to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.⁴ If not even hospital personnel are able to receive the PPE that they need, our first responders will be left similarly unprotected as they continue to perform their essential duties.

As members of the Law Enforcement Caucus and Fire Services Caucus, we urge you to continue exploring every possible avenue to increase the supply of PPE to put more of this critical equipment into the hands of those who need it most, including first responders. Specifically, this requires utilizing your authorities under the Defense Production Act to strengthen domestic manufacturing capacity by incentivizing private firms to produce PPE, including respirators, gloves, gowns, and eye protection, and to allocate some of these resources to first responders.

First responders are among our nation's most indispensable and dedicated public servants. The COVID-19 pandemic will not prevent firefighters, emergency medical services personnel, or police officers from performing their public safety duties. While first responders will not stop in their mission to protect us, we must uphold our end of the bargain to protect them and their families. Without aggressive federal action, we risk leaving first responders across the country without the tools and equipment they need to keep both themselves and our communities safe during this crisis.

Sincerely,



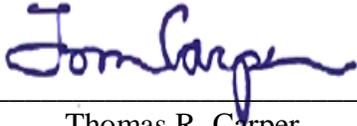
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

³ *Coronavirus Updates: FDNY, NYPD Feeling the Impact of Coronavirus on Two Fronts*, ABC7NY (March 27, 2020), <https://abc7ny.com/fdny-nypd-coronavirus-covid-19/6056041/>; *NYPD COVID-19 Cases Expected to Hit 900 Monday*, Pix 11 (March 30, 2020), <https://www.pix11.com/news/coronavirus/nypd-covid-19-cases-expected-to-hit-900-monday>.

⁴ Richard J. Pollack, James L. Madara, and Loressa Cole, *AHA, AMA and ANA Letter to the President to Use DPA for Medical Supplies and Equipment* (March 21, 2020), <https://www.aha.org/lettercomment/2020-03-21-aha-ama-and-ana-letter-president-use-dpa-medical-supplies-and-equipment>.



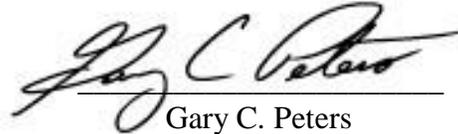
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



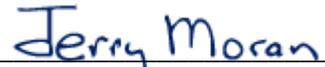
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



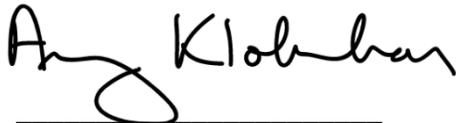
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator



Jerry Moran
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator