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March 17, 2020

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

Dear Mr. President:

I urge you to immediately exercise the powers authorized to you by the Defense Production Act (DPA) in order to address impending shortages of critical resources in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

After weeks of inaction, denial, and misinformation by your administration, the COVID-19 pandemic has now spread to every state in the nation, disturbing the life of virtually every American. More than 325 million Americans must now collectively hold their breath and hope that social distancing, curfews, and other extreme actions enable us to “flatten the curve” and prevent this crisis from becoming a worst-case scenario. But hope alone is not a strategy.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has projected that between 160 million and 214 million people could contract COVID-19 in the United States and between 2.4 million to 21 million of those infected would require hospitalization.¹ As a means of comparison, our hospital system has less than one million staffed beds, which would be inadequate even for the CDC’s most optimistic projection.

Hospitals must also have the resources and equipment available to treat the expected influx of patients. There is significant concern that the nation’s supply of mechanical respirators is inadequate to meet the exponential need we will likely experience in the coming weeks and months. The latest data indicates that there may only be 160,000 ventilators in the entire nation with only 62,000 of these being fully mechanical.² Even if only half of those hospitalized require ventilation, our supply will be wholly inadequate to fill the demand.

Healthcare workers also need protective gear to do their life-saving work without risking infection to themselves. Unfortunately, there have been multiple reports of shortages of personal protective

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/13/us/coronavirus-deaths-estimate.html>

² <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/03/14/815675678/as-the-pandemic-spreads-will-there-be-enough-ventilators>

equipment, even during the opening days of this outbreak.³ Failure to protect our healthcare workers and support staff, would cause a cascading effect that would cause our entire response to collapse.

While the administration's response has so far lacked the urgency this crisis has called for, there are still steps you can take to mitigate the damage. Invoking the powers vested in the DPA will enable the federal government to step up and take the type of aggressive steps needed in this time of uncertainty.

Sincerely,



ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator

³ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/15/politics/supply-chain-shortages-coronavirus-pandemic/index.html>