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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510 - 3505

March 21, 2020

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

Dear President Trump:

I write to express our grave concern regarding the persistent shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), medical devices, and other health care supplies critical to stopping the spread of and preventing deaths from the coronavirus. No health care worker in America should go without critical protection while fighting on the front lines of this pandemic. It puts their own health at risk, limits our capacity to care for patients, and contributes to the spread of this deadly virus. Domestic manufacturers are ready to serve their country during this public health emergency, but the federal government must provide the resources and coordination necessary to ramp up production. I urge you to take immediate steps to increase the supply of these life-saving items.

First and foremost, the Administration must quickly distribute any military stockpiles of PPE, medical devices, and health care supplies that have not already been deployed to communities around the country. It is unconscionable that any health care worker should have to ration masks or gowns while those items sit in government storage.

Even if existing stockpiles are deployed immediately, the coronavirus pandemic will demand greater and ongoing supply of PPE, medical devices, and other critical supplies. Domestic manufacturers are interested in helping to resolve these shortages, but they need assistance with understanding the technical specifications for the materials, expanding their capacity, securing the equipment, and maintaining a safe workforce to produce the items. The following steps must be taken to help U.S. manufacturers respond to the PPE and medical device shortfall.

- 1) PPE and Medical Device Point Person: The Administration must designate a government official to be the point person responsible for acquiring and developing production of PPE, medical devices, and other supplies necessary to fight the coronavirus pandemic. This point person will make it easier and more efficient for health care providers, state and local governments, domestic producers, and wholesale and logistics companies to get the information they need regarding PPE and medical device supply and demand.
- 2) PPE and Medical Device Assessment and Database: The Administration must urgently complete a national assessment of the supply and anticipated needs for PPE, ventilators, diagnostic test kits, and other needed medical supplies to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. This assessment should be used to establish and maintain a PPE and medical device database to ensure this information is available during the current and any future public health emergency.

- 3) List of PPE and Medical Device Needs: The Administration must publish online a list of all PPE and medical devices needed to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. The list should identify the volumes needed for each item, locations where shortages are greatest, technical specifications or standards the items must meet, any government efforts currently in place to increase the supply of the item, and any other critical information.
- 4) Hotline: The Administration must establish a hotline capable of handling significant call capacity that will provide U.S. producers centralized information about the results of the national assessment and the current need for PPE, devices, and other health care supplies. The hotline should provide further information about technical specifications, contracting requirements, and federal approval processes for relevant products.
- 5) Immediate Funding to Manufacturers: The Administration must immediately provide funding to manufacturers to purchase equipment, retool machinery, hire additional workers, and cover any other expenses needed to increase PPE and medical device production.
- 6) Streamlined Contract and Certification Procedures: The contracting process for all public health emergency materials must be streamlined and centralized to ensure production and delivery of materials are not delayed due to paperwork constraints. In addition, the Administration must ensure that federal agency product approvals for PPE and medical devices are expedited and streamlined wherever possible.
- 7) Provide Critical Protections For Workers: The Administration must work with states to allow companies who are making PPE, medical devices, and necessary supplies to receive a waiver from any shelter-in-place requirements to allow workers to volunteer to go to work in these critical industries. The Administration must provide immediate, company-specific OSHA consultations about the precautions companies should take to protect workers who volunteer to work to prevent the further spread of coronavirus among this critical workforce.
- 8) Purchase Guarantees and Delivery Assistance: The Administration must provide purchase guarantees and delivery of product to the communities and health care facilities that need the products most. Companies who ramp up production, particularly those who do so at their own expense, should have commitments from the government to purchase their product and help them get it to market. In addition, the Administration should create a centralized mechanism for facilities and providers to order product and track delivery. The Administration should require cooperation from wholesalers, distributors, and other supply chain partners to coordinate timely shipments of products.
- 9) Support for Sterilizing Companies: In addition to producing additional PPE, it is critical that the Administration provide assistance to companies who have the capacity to sterilize reusable equipment to alleviate the existing PPE shortage. The Administration should conduct explicit outreach to companies with these capabilities and provide any additional resources necessary to enable them to coordinate with health care providers, PPE suppliers, and health care suppliers to increase equipment sterilization capacity.

I urge you to take the specific actions outlined above immediately to address the current PPE, medical device, and health care supply shortfall. The lives of our health care workers and tens of thousands of current and future coronavirus patients depend on it.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator