

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 5, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-211 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We write to respectfully request that provisions that provide critical healthcare services to support underserved communities be prioritized as you negotiate coronavirus response legislation and included in future stimulus packages.

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic has touched every pocket of our country and communities of color are being harmed disproportionately by this crisis.¹ According to the COVID Racial Data Tracker, Black Americans are dying at nearly two times their national population share.² In five of the six counties with the highest death rates from the virus, Black Americans are the largest racial group. In Arizona, Native American death and case rates are five times their percentage of the state population. In Alaska, the Asian American case rate is two times their population. In the District, Maryland, and Virginia, Latinos are 10 percent of the population, yet make up a third of the COVID-19 cases in the region.³

These disparities are linked to social determinants of health, including but not limited to employment, housing, health insurance and medical care, neighborhood pollution, and food deserts. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Latino Americans are three times more likely to be uninsured than their Caucasian counterparts, and African Americans are two times more likely to be uninsured.⁴ While their rates of behavioral health disorders may not significantly differ from the general population, Blacks and Latinos have substantially lower access to substance use treatment and mental health services.⁵ Ethnic minorities are also more likely to live in areas that are densely populated and further from grocery stores and medical facilities. Furthermore, people of color have higher rates of chronic conditions, and according to the CDC, 90% of patients severely hospitalized with COVID-19 had at least one underlying medical condition.⁶

¹ <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-policy-watch/growing-data-underscore-communities-color-harder-hit-covid-19/>

² <https://covidtracking.com/race>

³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/latinos-coronavirus/2020/05/25/6b5c882a-946e-11ea-82b4-c8db161ff6e5_story.html

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html>

⁵ <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/data-we-collect/nsduh-national-survey-drug-use-and-health>

⁶ <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/covid19-racial-disparities>

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Our response to this pandemic will be insufficient if we do not tackle these disparities directly and prioritize policies in an equitable and just way.

As you may know, a key component to detecting and containing outbreaks is access to testing. With evidence mounting that Black American and Latino American communities are harder hit by this tragic disease, community leaders are voicing concerns about problematic testing disparities. Recent reporting has illuminated these disparities in access to public testing sites in Massachusetts, Texas, New York City, and Chicago.^{7,8} However, it is difficult to determine testing disparities on a national scale because data remains scarce and public health departments are drastically underfunded. If we are not testing our most vulnerable, we will miss pockets of infection, limit the success of mitigation efforts, and continue to see higher case counts and deaths across the country. It is also critical that vulnerable communities have access to healthcare and social support services, including treatment, if they test positive. Therefore, we request that you prioritize the inclusion of the following provisions during your negotiations that will help to address these ongoing challenges:

- \$75 billion for testing, contact tracing, and other activities necessary to effectively monitor and suppress COVID-19.
- \$2.1 billion for federal, state, and local public health agencies to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19.
- \$7.6 billion in emergency funding for Health Centers, which have been shown to reduce health disparities and improve the health of vulnerable populations, to expand the capacity to provide testing, triage, and care for COVID-19 and other health care services across the country. Additionally, Health Centers need stability and should no longer be faced with an uncertain future. It is imperative we provide at least a five-year extension at a minimum of \$69.7 billion so they can expand their presence and provide more services to more patients.
- \$2.1 billion for the Indian Health Service (IHS) to address health needs related to COVID-19 for Native Americans.
- \$38.5 billion for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to increase mental health support and substance abuse treatment during COVID-19, and to offer increased outreach.

While we are grateful for previous funding for testing, public health agencies, Health Centers, IHS, and SAMHSA, there is still an abundance of unmet need and closing these gaps are critical to suppressing this crisis in our communities. We ask that funding for these streams in future packages is no less than the amounts above and are targeted to address health disparities and support our most

⁷ <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/05/27/862215848/across-texas-black-and-hispanic-neighborhoods-have-fewer-coronavirus-testing-sit>

⁸ <https://www.masslive.com/coronavirus/2020/04/massachusetts-house-bill-seeks-to-root-out-racial-geographic-disparities-from-coronavirus-pandemic.html>

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

at-risk communities. Thousands of lives are depending on Congressional action. Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to health equity during this global pandemic and beyond.

Sincerely,



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



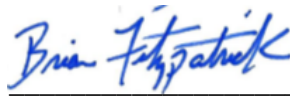
Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress



John Katko
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

/s/

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

/s/

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

/s/

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

/s/

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

/s/

Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/s/

G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

/s/

Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress

/s/

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

/s/

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

/s/

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

/s/

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

/s/

Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

/s/

J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

/s/
Jim Costa
Member of Congress

/s/
TJ Cox
Member of Congress

/s/
Joe Cunningham
Member of Congress

/s/
Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress

/s/
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

/s/
Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

/s/
Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

/s/
Val B. Demings
Member of Congress

/s/
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

/s/
Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

/s/
Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

/s/
Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

/s/
Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

/s/
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

/s/
Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

/s/
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

/s/
Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

/s/
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

/s/
Josh Harder
Member of Congress

/s/
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

/s/
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

/s/
Denny Heck
Member of Congress

/s/
Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress

/s/
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

/s/
Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

/s/
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

/s/
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/
William R. Keating
Member of Congress

/s/
John B. Larson
Member of Congress

/s/
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

/s/
Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

/s/
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

/s/
Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress

/s/
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

/s/
Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

/s/
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/
Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress

/s/
Donald M. Payne, Jr
Member of Congress

/s/
David E. Price
Member of Congress

/s/
Max Rose
Member of Congress

/s/
Harley Rouda
Member of Congress

/s/
Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

/s/
Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/
Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

/s/
Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

/s/
Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

/s/
John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

/s/
Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress

/s/
Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/
Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

/s/
Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

/s/
Darren Soto
Member of Congress

/s/
Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress

/s/
Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress

/s/
Tom Suozzi
Member of Congress

/s/
Dina Titus
Member of Congress

/s/
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

/s/
David Trone
Member of Congress

/s/
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

/s/
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

/s/
Peter Welch
Member of Congress

/s/
Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress

/s/
John Yarmuth
Member of Congress