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AND CAPITAL ACCESS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1310

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

April 14, 2020

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

As you consider legislative priorities in any upcoming stimulus packages to address the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you include the creation of a singular emergency COVID-19 medical supply chain statutory authority (i.e., “supply chain czar”). This authority should establish centralized responsibility to oversee and direct the unprecedented nation-wide production, acquisition and distribution of medical equipment critical to COVID-19 response with the expressed goal of streamlining and expediting delivery of in-demand supplies, while also reducing or eliminating the inter-state bidding wars that are driving up prices.

Our hospitals and providers continue to suffer from a lack of critical equipment, namely ventilators and personal protective equipment (PPE), resulting in substandard care, unsafe work conditions, and increasingly critical staffing shortages. Similarly, essential employers, such as grocers, truck lines and essential manufacturers (including makers of desperately needed ventilators) need access to PPE and cleaning/sanitizing supplies to avoid supply chain disruptions of essential goods and ensure a safe environment for both employees and customers.

This scarcity of these supplies, devices and equipment has left states to compete with one another to meet demand thus driving up prices, as well as subjecting hospitals and essential employers to price-gouging tactics from suppliers and charlatans looking to profit off the pandemic. Manufacturers are similarly left to decide between competing orders with minimal federal direction, possible fraudulent orders, and limited to no ability to increase production without the necessary access to subassemblies and component parts.

Unfortunately, the allocation of life-saving equipment and supplies has been uncoordinated and regrettably, at times, politicized. The Strategic National Stockpile has a grossly insufficient supply of ventilators and PPE, and further exacerbating the problem, that supply has to date not been appropriately allocated to states and localities based on severity of need.

We urge you to immediately remedy this situation by legislating a supply chain director, or “czar”, with statutory authority to oversee the manufacturing and distribution of ventilators, PPE, and other critical supplies. The director should work to eliminate complexity for all links in the supply chain, including states, hospitals, manufacturers, federal agencies, and essential employers. Such authorities could include, but are not limited to the ability to:

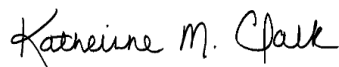
- Comprehensively survey states, hospitals, and essential employers, using existing resources and reporting where possible, to determine need of critical supplies, including the creation of a national database of current hospital capacity and supplies;
- Mandate, facilitate and enforce sufficient production levels under the Defense Production Act, particularly for components and raw materials;
- Become the centralized procurer of critical supplies, using the centralized authority and purchasing power to ensure an end to rampant price-gouging in the marketplace, including in the transportation of critical medical supplies;
- Distribute supplies based on most urgent need, at the discretion of the czar;
- Report daily supply gaps and progress made in closing the gaps.

Thank you for your rapid response to this ongoing pandemic. We appreciate your timely and close consideration of this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress



Katherine M. Clark
Member of Congress



Angie Craig
Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Raja Krishnamoorthi
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Jahana Hayes
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Suzan DelBene
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Jim Cooper
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Ted Deutch
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Seth Moulton
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Jamie Raskin
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Cheri Bustos
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David Trone
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