

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 29, 2020

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

Dear President Trump,

We write to you with urgency as the United States leads the world in the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths. The need for a coordinated and quickly executed national testing strategy is critical and beyond overdue. We continue to see shortages of testing supplies, like reagents, cartridges, swabs and pipettes in our states five months after the start of this pandemic, and it is unacceptable.

Just yesterday your Administration took important action to increase manufacturing of Hologic tests so they can increase production from 4.8 million tests to 6.8 million tests per month.¹ But the increase will not be available until about January 2021. The \$7.6 million partnership with Hologic is too little too late, and do not provide the level of transparency, coordination, or output that this is so desperately needed. We urge you to use your authority through the Defense Production Act (DPA) to ensure production of reagents, testing kits, and personal protective equipment (PPE) to meets the needs of our nursing homes, governors, hospitals, schools and businesses. They should not have to continue to scramble to access these critical supplies.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other health officials have recently put in place new guidelines that restrict testing to certain people because of the shortage of materials.² We know the consequences of this action—increased and unknown community spread. As public health and infectious disease experts continue to tell us, asymptomatic spreaders pose a dangerous threat to our most vulnerable, and we need to be increasing our testing to reach mitigation and suppression of this virus. Right now, the U.S. is only doing about 38 percent of the testing we need to mitigate this virus.³

¹ <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2020/07/26/hhs-dod-invest-7-6m-hologic-expand-production-custom-sample-collection-processing-consumables-covid-19-tests.html>

² https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-test-shortages-prompt-health-authorities-to-narrow-access-11595515592?mod=hp_lead_pos7&utm_campaign=wp_the_health_202&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpsrc=nl_health202

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-testing.html>

The partnership with Hologic is important, but a single partnership with a single testing company is insufficient when the need for testing supplies and expanded lab capacity is a national problem. Congress has provided the Administration with tens of billions of dollars to increase capacity for testing, and yet we have seen no progress. According to Admiral Giroir, the Administration's own coronavirus testing czar, the average turnaround time for a test is over four days.⁴

As we approach the fall, we demand your Administration use all available authorities, including the DPA, and continue to pursue partnerships that will ensure our states have the supplies they need to prevent more Americans from dying from COVID-19. Your obsession with reopening our communities without supporting them with the supplies they need is leading to unnecessary deaths, and inevitably hurts the economies in these communities even more. Without leadership, and a national strategy to expand testing and contact tracing, we will continue to see a thousand Americans die every day.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/26/politics/brett-giroir-testing-times-coronavirus-cnntv/index.html>