

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 12, 2020

The Honorable Peter Gaynor  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20472

The Honorable Alex Azar  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Administrator Gaynor and Secretary Azar,

We write to express our concern about the rising rate of coronavirus infections in states across the nation and to respectfully request that you send additional health care professionals to states experiencing a surge in cases and a shortage of medical staff available to treat infected patients.

Many states are experiencing an unprecedented rise in coronavirus cases, coupled with increasing hospitalization rates. This week, the United States experienced a record-breaking number of new cases recorded in a single day, with more than 140,000 cases reported on November 11 alone.<sup>1</sup>

The rapid increase in cases is not confined to any one part of the country—23 states have recorded more cases in the past week than in any other seven-day period since the pandemic began.<sup>2</sup> Hospitalizations due to coronavirus infection peaked in 22 states on November 9, and 23 states currently have over 1,000 patients hospitalized with coronavirus infections.<sup>3</sup>

This surge in infections and hospitalizations is putting a strain on our already exhausted health care systems and essential care workers, who are not immune from the virus.<sup>4</sup> These workers have been on the frontlines since the pandemic began and many have been infected with the virus or have been required to quarantine due to exposure to the virus—resulting in serious health care staffing shortages across the nation. These pandemic-induced staffing shortages have shuttered clinics, emptied local health departments, and in some cases forced hospitals to ask workers exposed to the virus to continue working.

We appreciate the medical staffing support that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have already provided to

---

<sup>1</sup> CNN (2020, November 11). *New U.S. Coronavirus Cases Top 140,000, a Record High for Daily Count*. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/11/health/us-coronavirus-wednesday/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Axios (2020, November 9). *23 States Set Single-Day Coronavirus Case Records Last Week*. <https://www.axios.com/state-coronavirus-infection-records-dacd090e-3fa3-4e1b-9aa7-76e1a2690418.html>.

<sup>3</sup> NPR (2020, November 10). *COVID-19 Hospitalizations Hit Record Highs. Where Are Hospitals Reaching Capacity?* <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/11/10/933253317/covid-19-hospitalizations-are-surging-where-are-hospitals-reaching-capacity> and <https://covidtracking.com/data/>; The COVID Tracking Project (retrieved 2020, November 12). Data by State. <https://covidtracking.com/data>.

<sup>4</sup> Associated Press (2020, October 26). *COVID-19 Infections Causing Health Care Worker Shortages*. <https://apnews.com/article/pandemics-virus-outbreak-health-helena-montana-71b4a1f83cf6e2d6c97cba6613085d23>.

states, which has been critical in helping these states treat infected patients during the pandemic. But as cases surge across the country, states require significantly more support to address pressing medical staffing shortages. If infection rates continue to rise as we enter the holiday season and people spend more time indoors, this pressing need for additional medical staff will become even more acute.

Therefore, we respectfully request that you take action to proactively extend the current federal support that FEMA and HHS are providing to states and swiftly send additional medical professionals to states that are experiencing a surge in coronavirus cases and deaths.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We look forward to working with you to continue providing support for Americans during the coronavirus pandemic.

Sincerely,

/S/ Amy Klobuchar  
Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

/S/ Bernard Sanders  
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

/S/ Tina Smith  
Tina Smith  
United States Senator

/S/ Kyrsten Sinema  
Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator

/S/ Tammy Baldwin  
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

/S/ Richard Blumenthal  
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

/S/ Jeffrey A. Merkley  
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

/S/ Chris Van Hollen  
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

/S/ Jacky Rosen  
Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator