

President Donald Trump
Vice-President Mike Pence
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

April 7, 2020

President Trump and Vice-President Pence,

We are writing to you as representatives of unions and organizations from the environmental, environmental justice, business and scientific community. We write on behalf of millions of frontline workers—healthcare workers, food service and hospitality workers, transit operators, educators, public employees, flight attendants, telecom workers and many more - whose lives are at immediate risk in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. We share a deep concern for the health and well-being of our front-line workers, their families, and our communities.

We implore you to immediately exercise the full powers of the government available to you, at the scale and speed necessary, to protect these workers and confront the coronavirus crisis. Only the federal government has the tools available to maximize protections for these workers, yet you are failing to provide the leadership that this moment demands.

Nurses, doctors and other healthcare professionals are treating patients without the basic protection and equipment they need to do their jobs. The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that we have just 1 percent of the N-95 respirators and surgical masks needed.¹ A US Conference of Mayors survey found that an alarming 91% of cities lack the N-95 respirators needed for first responders and medical personnel, and 88% lack other necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).²

The desperate need for PPE goes far beyond healthcare workers. Janitors are deep cleaning buildings, teachers' aides are delivering meals to children at home, warehouse and manufacturing workers are making and distributing essential goods, home care providers are caring for the most vulnerable, public service workers are maintaining essential services, bus operators are taking essential workers to their jobs, telecom workers are entering homes to repair vital internet services, childcare workers are caring for our children and cashiers are scanning groceries—all at greater risk of contracting the coronavirus without enough PPE to lessen exposure.

States, cities, school districts and government agencies are competing to access limited supplies and manufacturers are seeking guidance on distribution priorities. As Governors Larry Hogan of Maryland and Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan point out: "Right now, there is not a single authority tracking where every spare ventilator is or where there are shortages. The lack

¹ <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/04/hhs-clarifies-us-has-about-1percent-of-face-masks-needed-for-full-blown-pandemic.html>

² https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/coronavirus-mayors-mask-equipment-shortage/2020/03/27/fc2a45a4-701f-11ea-96a0-df4c5d9284af_story.html; <https://www.usmayors.org/issues/covid-19/equipment-survey/>

of any centralized coordination is creating counterproductive competition between states and the federal government to secure limited supplies, driving up prices and exacerbating existing shortages.”³ The same dynamic is at play with all personal protective equipment.

The Administration must immediately assess the medical equipment needs, inventory supplies in the public and private sectors, prioritize and distribute those supplies fairly and accelerate the production of needed supplies where gaps exist. Current laws, including the Defense Production Act whose provisions have been only partially invoked and unevenly executed, allow the President to take these actions. The enormous loss of life that your advisors project over the next few months should compel you to do so.

Every minute that you do not take decisive action places lives at risk and our nation and the people of the world in even greater peril. How is it that the wealthiest nation on the planet now has the highest number of documented COVID-19 cases with no clear end in sight? The answer lies in your hands.

We urge you to act urgently to implement the following measures:

- Immediately distribute the respirators and other personal protective equipment held in the Strategic National Stockpile,
- Use all powers of the federal government to more aggressively and broadly deploy the Defense Production Act, to speed immediate production of new protective equipment and ensure it is routed to states for distribution across acute care, home care and long term care settings, as well as other industries whose workers confront the risk of exposure on a daily basis in their workplace. We ask you to do this while fully enforcing environmental protections and ensuring that communities near sterilization facilities do not face additional public health threats,
- Identify reserves of respirators, including N95s and PAPRs, and other PPE equipment in other industries, such as construction, and redistribute them to healthcare providers and other frontline workers,
- Immediately direct the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Department of Health and Human Services to instruct the Pentagon where to send the 2,000 ventilators it says it has in its military stocks,
- Direct FEMA to work directly with manufacturers and distributors to purchase PPE and other equipment and stop forcing states to compete with the federal government and each other. FEMA should institute a transparent process to allocate PPE, ventilators and other equipment from the Strategic National Stockpile based on state population need,
- Require the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to institute the emergency temporary standard for infectious disease and health protections related to COVID-19 and prevent any further erosion of health and safety guidelines throughout the federal government and across the economy.

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/03/30/larry-hogan-gretchen-whitmer-what-governors-need-washington-during-this-health-emergency/>

Sincerely,

**Amalgamated Transit Union International
American Federation of Teachers
Association of Flight Attendants-CWA
Communications Workers of America
National Nurses United
Service Employees International Union
United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America
UNITE HERE**

**350.org
BlueGreen Alliance
Climate Justice Alliance
Environmental Defense Fund
Friends of the Earth US
Greenpeace USA
Indivisible
Jobs with Justice
League of Conservation Voters
MoveOn
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Peoples Action
Public Citizen
Sierra Club
Sunrise Movement
Union of Concerned Scientists
Labor Network for Sustainability**

1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East
350 Philadelphia
350 Triangle
ActionAid USA
Agricultural Missions, Inc
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
American Federation of Government Employees Local 704
American Federation of Teachers Vermont
American Sustainable Business Council
Anthropocene Alliance
Asian Pacific Environmental Network
Avazz
Berkshire County Branch NAACP
Best Friends of Low Country Transit - South Carolina
Breast Cancer Action
Brighter Green
Call to Action-CO
CatholicNetwork.US
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Environmental Health
Center for International Environmental Law
Center for Sustainable Economy
Climate Parents
Connecticut Roundtable on Climate & Jobs

Earth Ethics, Inc.
Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power & Light
Earthjustice
Earthworks
East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
EcoEquity, USA
Ecology Center
Endangered Species Coalition
Energy Justice Network
Environmental Health Strategy Center
Fire Drill Fridays
Former EPA Regional Administrator
Fossil Free California
FracTracker Alliance
FreshWater Accountability Project Ohio
Georgia Stand-Up
GreenFaith
Green Latinos
Health Care Without Harm
Heirs To Our Oceans
Hispanic Federation
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Institute for Policy Studies Climate Policy Program
Jobs to Move America
Long Island Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO
Maine AFL-CIO
Maine Labor Group on Health
Maine State Nurses Association
Mothers Out Front
NextGen America
North Carolina Climate Justice Collective
North Carolina League of Conservation Voters Fund
North Carolina WARN
NextGen America
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
National Union of Hospital and Healthcare Employees, AFSCME District 1199NM
Ohio Interfaith Power & Light
Oil Change International
Oregon Environmental Council
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
Partnership for Policy Integrity
Partnership Project
Peoples Climate Movement
Philly Transit Riders Union
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Presente.org
Rachel Carson Council
Railroad Workers United
Rainforest Action Network
RapidShift.net
Riverkeeper

San Antonio Bay Estuarine Waterkeeper
SanDiego350
Sustainable Energy & Economy Network
The Climate Center
The Climate Mobilization
The Climate Reality Project
The Imani Group Inc
The Post-Landfill Action Network
The Rusty Anvil
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 21
United We Dream
Women's Environment and Development Organization.
York University Canada

CC:

Representative Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives
Representative Nita Lowey, Chair, Appropriations Committee
Representative Bobby Scott, Chair, Labor and Education Committee
Representative Carolyn Maloney, Chair, Oversight and Reform
Representative Frank Pallone, Jr. Chair, Energy and Commerce Committee
Senator Mitch McConnell, Senate Majority Leader
Senator Chuck Schumer, Senate Minority Leader
Senator Richard Shelby, Chair, Appropriations Committee
Senator Lamar Alexander, Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
Senator Ron Johnson, Chair, Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee