

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 15, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave NW
Washington, DC, 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

Washington state has been on the frontlines fighting COVID-19 with over 600 confirmed cases and 40 deaths. We appreciate efforts by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide timely delivery of personal protective equipment (PPE), but remain deeply concerned that the current supply of PPE is inadequate to meet the need for PPE in Washington state. As such, we urge you to fulfill requests from Washington state for distribution of PPE from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) now and in the future.

We commend the efforts of Washington state and local public health departments to distribute and allocate the limited supply of PPE to those most in need. However, many health centers, nursing facilities, fire departments, and other sectors throughout the state have either depleted their supply of PPE or will run out in a matter of days. The King County Fire Department for example, recently quarantined firefighters due to exposure to COVID-19 without PPE. Additionally, the Washington State Hospital Association has indicated that hospitals throughout the state are not receiving the amount of PPE requested, and efforts to purchase PPE independently have also been so far unsuccessful. Meanwhile, the Richmond Beach Rehab Center only has PPE for another week, and their vendor is out of stock, and Vancouver firefighters have been reusing respirators to stretch their limited supply. In smaller, rural, and island communities, supplies are even more limited, with profound impacts on public health and safety. There are many more examples of how local agencies throughout Washington state are being impacted due to the PPE deficit.

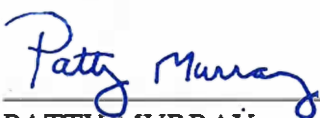
The lack of PPE endangers the health of people on the frontlines, including local health agencies, health workers, and emergency personnel, and limits their ability to respond to those in need and to efficiently curtail the COVID-19 pandemic. A lack of PPE threatens to further endanger the state's health care workforce, amplifying the public health crisis in Washington state. For these reasons, it is critical that Washington state have access to sufficient PPE as soon as possible to curtail the spread of COVID-19. We urge you to be fully responsive to


Washington state's PPE requests from the National Strategic Stockpile. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



PRAMILA JAYAPAL
Member of Congress



JAIME HERRERA BEUTLER
Member of Congress


PATTY MURRAY
United States Senator


MARIA CANTWELL
United States Senator



ADAM SMITH
Member of Congress


RICK LARSEN
Member of Congress


SUZAN DELBENE
Member of Congress


DENNY HECK
Member of Congress


DEREK KILMER
Member of Congress


KIM SCHRIER, M.D.
Member of Congress