April 27, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
US House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
Majority Leader  
US House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Hoyer,

Thank you for your incredible leadership to prioritize American health care workers during the coronavirus crisis. As Congress looks toward the next stimulus package, we ask that you include provisions that protect the jobs of these frontline workers and ensure they are duly compensated and supported for the risk they are undertaking. These professionals are working around the clock to save lives and stop the spread of the virus. As these heroes risk their lives to combat the epidemic, they should know that their government has their back.

Health care workers are making a significant sacrifice as they serve the public in this hazardous environment. These workers are at a higher risk of experiencing severe symptoms and complications when they contract COVID-19.1 The Lancet recently estimated that 20% of Italian health professionals have been infected with COVID-19.2 In Ohio and Minnesota, health care workers make up an estimated 20% of all cases.3 To make matters worse, workers across the

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country are reporting they lack basic personal protective equipment, increasing their chance of infection.

Health care workers deserve our full support for their critical work in this moment. Along with continuing to push for the production and distribution of personal protective equipment that our providers desperately need, we hope that you include provisions in the next stimulus that ensure the following:

1. Prevent cuts to pay and benefits of providers and hospital workers. A ProPublica report released on March 31 revealed that many medical corporations are cutting benefits for doctors and nurses during this time. Due to the financial burden placed on the health care providers from the pandemic, some medical companies are cutting costs by slashing salaries, decreasing hours, withholding earned pay, ending 401(k) matches, suspending paid leave, and putting employees on unpaid furloughs. As these heroes risk their lives, they should not have to worry about the impact of these cuts on their families. Just as we are supporting small businesses to keep employees on payroll and prevent cuts to worker pay, we should ensure that hospitals and health facilities support our providers and support staff as well.

2. Protect health care workers from infection and against retaliation — for example, from wearing their own personal protective equipment or whistleblowing on unsafe practices in their facilities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a report finding that more than 9,000 health care workers have been infected with COVID-19. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration is the only federal agency with the authority to protect health care workers. OSHA should issue an Emergency Temporary Standard protecting health care workers from infection on the job. In addition, there are a growing number of reports of workers being fired for wearing their own masks or speaking out about the lack of personal protective equipment in their hospitals. These workers are simply trying to protect themselves and their colleagues. The public needs them healthy and in their jobs — not otherwise.

3. Provide essential worker pay to our health workers on the frontline, as well as financial assistance to cover the needs of the job, such as temporary housing for quarantine purposes away from family members or childcare due to school closures. Such additional compensation would reflect the risk that these workers undertake, as well as provide the

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additional financial support that covers the unexpected costs of being a practicing provider at this time.

4. **Provide financial support to these heroes related to the impact of COVID-19 infection from their work**, including expenses related to treatment of COVID-19 for providers and their households, financial support for potential long-term effects of severe illness from COVID-19 infection, and survivors’ benefits for families of any providers or hospital workers who die from infection of COVID-19 in the health care facility. We are in war with this virus, and we must support our heroes who are putting their health and lives on the line.

In this next package, we encourage you to include provisions that are responsive to the sacrifices our health care providers and health care support staff are making every day. When America goes to war, we take care of our soldiers when they are on the frontline and afterwards, when they return home. We took care of our public safety and law enforcement officers for the sacrifices they made during 9/11. If we are going to fight the coronavirus like a war, we should protect those fighting for us on the frontlines. Health care workers are protecting us, our families, and our communities. They deserve to be protected in return.

Sincerely,

Norma J. Torres
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Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress
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