

NORMA J. TORRES
35TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

2444 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BLDG
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
PHONE: (202) 225-6161
FAX: (202) 225-8671

3200 INLAND EMPIRE, SUITE 200B
ONTARIO, CA 91764
PHONE: (909) 481-6474
FAX: (909) 941-1362

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

COMMITTEE ON RULES
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
REGIONAL WHIP

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

¹ Howard, Jacqueline. "Health Care Workers Getting Sicker from Coronavirus than Other Patients, Expert Says." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 19 Mar. 2020, www.cnn.com/2020/03/16/health/doctors-coronavirus-health-care-hit-harder/index.html.

² Remuzzi, Andrea, and Giuseppe Remuzzi. "COVID-19 and Italy: What next?" *The Lancet*, 2020, doi:10.1016/s0140-6736(20)30627-9.

³ Przybyla, Heidi, and Sarah Fitzpatrick. "Health Care Workers See Wave of Coronavirus Coming in Their Ranks." *NBCNews.com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 1 Apr. 2020, www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/health-care-workers-see-wave-coronavirus-coming-their-ranks-n1174271.

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 31st 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.⁴⁵⁶ 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

⁴ Fadel, Leila. “Doctors Say Hospitals Are Stopping Them From Wearing Masks.” *NPR*, NPR, 2 Apr. 2020, www.npr.org/2020/04/02/825200206/doctors-say-hospitals-are-stopping-them-from-wearing-masks.

⁵ Court, Emma, and Kristen V. Brown. “Hospitals Tell Doctors They’ll Be Fired If They Speak out about Lack of Gear.” *Fortune*, Fortune, 31 Mar. 2020, fortune.com/2020/03/31/coronavirus-shortages-hospitals-doctors-fired-face-masks-ppe/.

⁶ Characteristics of Health Care Personnel with COVID-19 — United States, February 12–April 9, 2020. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* ePub: 14 April 2020. DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6915e6external icon](http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6915e6external%20icon).

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
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

Val B. Demings
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Abby Finkenauer
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

John Garamendi
Member of Congress

Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

Kendra S. Horn
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

William Keating
Member of Congress

Conor Lamb
Member of Congress

John B. Larson
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Max Rose
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

José E. Serrano
Member of Congress

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

Mark Takano
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

Jeff Van Drew
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress