

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 5, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
H-232 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
H-204 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-230 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-211 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We write to respectfully request that provisions that provide critical healthcare services to support underserved communities be prioritized as you negotiate coronavirus response legislation and included in future stimulus packages.

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic has touched every pocket of our country and communities of color are being harmed disproportionately by this crisis.<sup>1</sup> According to the COVID Racial Data Tracker, Black Americans are dying at nearly two times their national population share.<sup>2</sup> In five of the six counties with the highest death rates from the virus, Black Americans are the largest racial group. In Arizona, Native American death and case rates are five times their percentage of the state population. In Alaska, the Asian American case rate is two times their population. In the District, Maryland, and Virginia, Latinos are 10 percent of the population, yet make up a third of the COVID-19 cases in the region.<sup>3</sup>

These disparities are linked to social determinants of health, including but not limited to employment, housing, health insurance and medical care, neighborhood pollution, and food deserts. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Latino Americans are three times more likely to be uninsured than their Caucasian counterparts, and African Americans are two times more likely to be uninsured.<sup>4</sup> While their rates of behavioral health disorders may not significantly differ from the general population, Blacks and Latinos have substantially lower access to substance use treatment and mental health services.<sup>5</sup> Ethnic minorities are also more likely to live in areas that are densely populated and further from grocery stores and medical facilities. Furthermore, people of color have higher rates of chronic conditions, and according to the CDC, 90% of patients severely hospitalized with COVID-19 had at least one underlying medical condition.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-policy-watch/growing-data-underscore-communities-color-harder-hit-covid-19/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://covidtracking.com/race>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/latinos-coronavirus/2020/05/25/6b5c882a-946e-11ea-82b4-c8db161ff6e5\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/latinos-coronavirus/2020/05/25/6b5c882a-946e-11ea-82b4-c8db161ff6e5_story.html)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/data-we-collect/nsduh-national-survey-drug-use-and-health>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/covid19-racial-disparities>

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

Our response to this pandemic will be insufficient if we do not tackle these disparities directly and prioritize policies in an equitable and just way.

As you may know, a key component to detecting and containing outbreaks is access to testing. With evidence mounting that Black American and Latino American communities are harder hit by this tragic disease, community leaders are voicing concerns about problematic testing disparities. Recent reporting has illuminated these disparities in access to public testing sites in Massachusetts, Texas, New York City, and Chicago.<sup>7,8</sup> However, it is difficult to determine testing disparities on a national scale because data remains scarce and public health departments are drastically underfunded. If we are not testing our most vulnerable, we will miss pockets of infection, limit the success of mitigation efforts, and continue to see higher case counts and deaths across the country. It is also critical that vulnerable communities have access to healthcare and social support services, including treatment, if they test positive. Therefore, we request that you prioritize the inclusion of the following provisions during your negotiations that will help to address these ongoing challenges:

- \$75 billion for testing, contact tracing, and other activities necessary to effectively monitor and suppress COVID-19.
- \$2.1 billion for federal, state, and local public health agencies to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19.
- \$7.6 billion in emergency funding for Health Centers, which have been shown to reduce health disparities and improve the health of vulnerable populations, to expand the capacity to provide testing, triage, and care for COVID-19 and other health care services across the country. Additionally, Health Centers need stability and should no longer be faced with an uncertain future. It is imperative we provide at least a five-year extension at a minimum of \$69.7 billion so they can expand their presence and provide more services to more patients.
- \$2.1 billion for the Indian Health Service (IHS) to address health needs related to COVID-19 for Native Americans.
- \$38.5 billion for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to increase mental health support and substance abuse treatment during COVID-19, and to offer increased outreach.

While we are grateful for previous funding for testing, public health agencies, Health Centers, IHS, and SAMHSA, there is still an abundance of unmet need and closing these gaps are critical to suppressing this crisis in our communities. We ask that funding for these streams in future packages is no less than the amounts above and are targeted to address health disparities and support our most

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/05/27/862215848/across-texas-black-and-hispanic-neighborhoods-have-fewer-coronavirus-testing-sit>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.masslive.com/coronavirus/2020/04/massachusetts-house-bill-seeks-to-root-out-racial-geographic-disparities-from-coronavirus-pandemic.html>

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

at-risk communities. Thousands of lives are depending on Congressional action. Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to health equity during this global pandemic and beyond.


Sincerely,



Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress



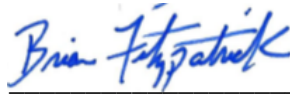
Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress



Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
Member of Congress



John Katko  
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress

/s/

Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress

/s/

Karen Bass  
Member of Congress

/s/

Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress

/s/

Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/

Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

/s/

Anthony G. Brown  
Member of Congress

/s/

G. K. Butterfield  
Member of Congress

/s/

Matt Cartwright  
Member of Congress

/s/

Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

/s/

Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

/s/

Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

/s/

Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

/s/

Jim Cooper  
Member of Congress

/s/

J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

/s/  
Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

/s/  
TJ Cox  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Joe Cunningham  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Sharice L. Davids  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Val B. Demings  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Josh Harder  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Denny Heck  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

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

/s/  
William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

/s/  
John B. Larson  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Joseph D. Morelle  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Tom O'Halleran  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Donald M. Payne, Jr  
Member of Congress

/s/  
David E. Price  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Max Rose  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Harley Rouda  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress

/s/  
John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Adam Smith  
Member of Congress

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

/s/  
Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Elise M. Stefanik  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Haley M. Stevens  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Tom Suozzi  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Dina Titus  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

/s/  
David Trone  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Peter Welch  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jennifer Wexton  
Member of Congress

/s/  
John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress