

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar II
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

We appreciate your efforts to address the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and write to request swift federal assistance on urgent requests made by the State of Illinois for responding to this public health challenge. Yesterday, Illinois reported its first death resulting from COVID-19; as our cases rapidly increase, we urge you to take immediate action to assist our state and local public health infrastructure.

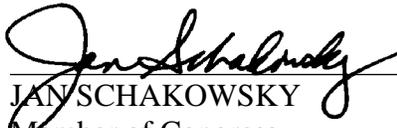
On March 4, 2020, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) requested distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) from the federal Strategic National Stockpile (SNS). These masks, respirators, gloves, and gowns are essential equipment that our front-line hospital, community health center, and health care workers rely upon in treating patients who present with COVID-19 symptoms. To date, the State of Illinois has not received clear indications from the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response about when to expect the requested PPE from the SNS. And last week, the Chicago Department of Public Health was informed it was receiving only 25,000 N95 masks, a fraction of both the local need and the allotment it received of one million masks during the H1N1 outbreak. We request your immediate action to fulfill the state's PPE request to the greatest extent practicable and provide clear expectations to Illinois.

Further, the federal government's diagnostic testing response continues to pose an unacceptable challenge for Illinois. We appreciate the Food and Drug Administration's expeditious work to authorize new diagnostic platforms, identify alternate reagents, and explore flexibilities to boost clinical testing capacity. We also recognize Illinois was among the first states to obtain the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) test kit. However, Illinois is now facing shortfalls of the extraction reagent needed to conduct the testing, which is obtained through the CDC's ordering system. We request your assistance to ensure IDPH has a robust supply of test kit supplies and that the state's efforts to augment its testing capacity do not face regulatory delays.

Finally, we ask that you work with the State of Illinois to quickly finalize and approve an 1135 Medicaid Waiver to ensure the state can broaden coverage eligibility, provide faster enrollment for newly eligible individuals, and expand covered health care services, including telehealth. All of these flexibilities will be crucial to contain and mitigate COVID-19 in Illinois.

Thank you for your Department's efforts to address the myriad challenges posed by this public health pandemic. We stand ready to work with your agencies to ensure Illinois' public health and health care needs in responding to COVID-19 are properly met.

Sincerely,



IAN SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress



CHERI BUSTOS
Member of Congress



DANNY K. DAVIS
Member of Congress



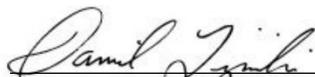
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ROBIN L. KELLY
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RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHY
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DANIEL LIPINSKI
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BOBBY L. RUSH
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RODNEY DAVIS
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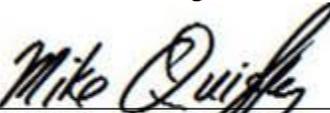
JESUS G. "CHUY" GARCÍA
Member of Congress



ADAM KINZINGER
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BRAD SCHNEIDER
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