

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 11, 2020

Vice President Mike Pence  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Vice President Pence:

We write to you in your capacity as head of the White House Coronavirus Task Force (Task Force) to urge the Task Force to take every action in its power to support states, including Massachusetts, as they combat the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

It is now clear that COVID-19 has been spreading undetected around the country, as demand for COVID-19 diagnostic tests overwhelmed the limited supply provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in recent weeks.<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing, there are over 117,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases worldwide, and over 4,200 people have died from the disease.<sup>2</sup> The U.S. has over 700 confirmed cases and 26 deaths, with thousands more under quarantine and surveillance.<sup>3</sup> Massachusetts has reported 92 coronavirus cases, and just yesterday, Governor Baker declared a state of emergency in the Commonwealth.<sup>4</sup>

As the Task Force continues to respond to COVID-19's spread, it is essential that it supports and communicates with the state, local, and tribal governments providing on-the-ground responses to the virus. As the elected officials representing Massachusetts in Washington, we strongly urge you to:

- **Support the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's request for assets from the Strategic National Stockpile.** On March 5, 2020, the Commonwealth submitted a request to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) for access to personal protective equipment, among other resources, from the Strategic National Stockpile.<sup>5</sup> We urge you to provide this access without delay.

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<sup>1</sup> Politico, "Trump's mismanagement helped fuel coronavirus crisis," Dan Diamond, March 7, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/07/trump-coronavirus-management-style-123465>.

<sup>2</sup> Johns Hopkins University, "Coronavirus COVID-19 Global Cases by Johns Hopkins CSSE," accessed March 9, 2020, <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>.

<sup>3</sup> CNN, "US coronavirus cases rise sharply to more than 700 and cruise ship with 21 more patients arrives in port," Steve Alamy, Madeline Holcombe, and Sarah Moon, March 9, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/09/health/us-coronavirus-monday/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> NBC10 Boston, "Gov. Baker Declares State of Emergency as Mass. Coronavirus Cases Rise to 92," Marc Fortier, <https://www.nbc10.com/news/local/gov-baker-to-speak-on-states-coronavirus-preparedness/2088681/>.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Monica Bharel, MD, MPH, Massachusetts Department of Health, to Mr. Gary J. Kleinman, Regional Administrator, Region 1 (New England), Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, March 5, 2020.

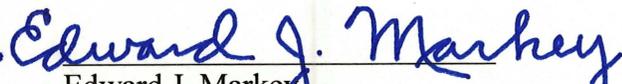
- **Take all necessary steps to expand access to affordable COVID-19 diagnostic tests.** Massachusetts currently has the capacity to conduct 40-50 COVID-19 tests per day.<sup>6</sup> The state needs expanded capacity to test for COVID-19 as the virus continues to spread. We urge you to take action to expand access to COVID-19 diagnostic tests in Massachusetts. We also urge you to take federal action to ensure those tests are affordable to individuals seeking them.
- **Continually monitor the supplemental funding needs of Massachusetts public health officials and request supplemental funding from Congress as necessary.** Last week, Congress approved—and the President signed—an \$8.3 billion emergency supplemental appropriations package to help slow the spread of coronavirus, which included \$950 million to support state and local agencies.<sup>7</sup> As COVID-19 continues to circulate nationwide, we urge you to stay in close contact with Massachusetts public health officials to assess their funding needs. As the need arises, we urge you to request the additional supplemental funding from Congress necessary to combat the virus. These funds should be distributed to Massachusetts as fast as possible to ensure the state can respond quickly to COVID-19.
- **Consider the need for wraparound services for quarantined, sick, and other individuals affected by COVID-19.** It is essential that individuals affected by COVID-19 are able to travel to, access, and pay for the health care services they need, regardless of income. In addition, individuals who rely on state and federal services to access affordable food, housing, and other services will continue to rely on those services, irrespective of COVID-19's spread. As broader swaths of individuals are impacted by the spread of COVID-19, we urge you to consider the transportation, housing, food, and other needs that sick and quarantined individuals—as well of their families—will need as the virus spreads.

While our request is specific to Massachusetts, we believe that the Task Force should consider taking these actions in support of other states as well. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

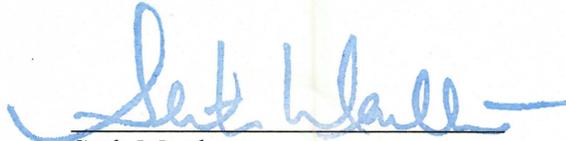
<sup>6</sup>NBC Boston, "Boston Hospitals Await Coronavirus Test Results," Nia Hamm, March 7, 2020, <https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/boston-hospitals-expect-coronavirus-test-results-saturday/2087227/>.

<sup>7</sup> CNBC, "Senate passes \$8.3 billion emergency coronavirus package, sending bill to Trump's desk," Kevin Breuninger, March 5, 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/05/senate-passes-8point3-billion-coronavirus-bill-sending-it-to-trumps-desk.html>.



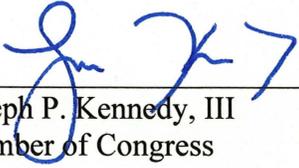
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Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress



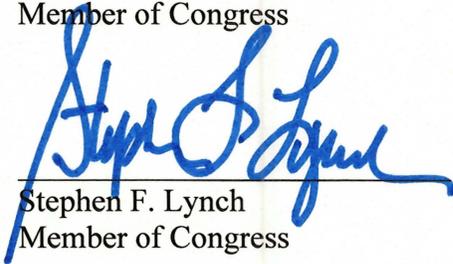
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Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress



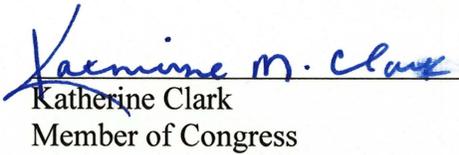
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Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
Member of Congress



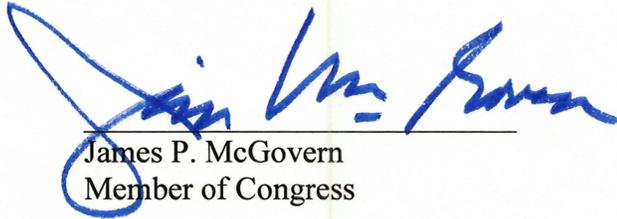
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Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



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Katherine Clark  
Member of Congress



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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



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Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress



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William R. Keating  
Member of Congress