

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 15, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

Thank you for your bipartisan work to respond to the health and economic effects of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in the United States. As you prepare for the next relief package, we respectfully request at least \$5.6 billion in funding to develop and support the critical vaccine infrastructure necessary to ensure that when a COVID-19 vaccine is available, it can be readily deployed across the country, particularly to high-risk populations. Successful and equitable distribution of a safe and effective vaccine is vital to allow our country and our economy to fully recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, to save lives over the long term, and to get Americans back to work safely. However, the public health potential of a vaccine can only be realized by the system that ensures sufficient vaccination rates across the country to protect people from the virus and keep the disease from reemerging.

We were pleased to support previous COVID-19 emergency response bills that included critical funding for the development, production, and manufacturing of a vaccine and helped ensure health insurance coverage of a vaccine for many Americans. The Coronavirus Preparedness & Response Supplemental Appropriations Act (PL 116-123) included nearly \$900 million in supplemental appropriations for research and development of vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics for COVID-19. Further, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (PL 116-136) provided \$3.5 billion in funding for manufacturing, production, and purchase of vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics for COVID-19. In addition, the CARES Act ensures private insurance coverage and Medicare coverage of a vaccine with no cost sharing. These are all critical steps to bolster vaccine development as quickly as possible and ensure the American people can afford the vaccine when available.

Just as Congress has invested in vaccine development, we must also invest in the deployment of a vaccine against COVID-19. As such, we ask that the next COVID-19 relief legislation include at least \$3.6 billion for state and local infrastructure to develop vaccine distribution systems, deploy the vaccine to ensure coverage across every community, track COVID-19 vaccine coverage, monitor the safety of the vaccine, and support a media and education campaign to educate providers and ensure community outreach. Such funding must be made available as soon as possible to allow states the time to build out this vaccine infrastructure and purchase the supplies needed so that systems are in place and ready to launch as soon as a vaccine is available. We cannot afford to wait until a vaccine is approved to begin this critical work.

Given the prediction that a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic will emerge in the fall and winter and overlap with the flu season, we also ask that the next COVID-19 relief

package include \$2 billion over Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021 for flu awareness and education and flu vaccination campaigns to ensure people get vaccinated for the flu. This effort will be critical to protect people from getting infected with the flu virus, keep them out of the hospital in order to preserve beds for COVID-19 patients, and prevent people from being infected with both viruses simultaneously, which could be even more lethal and overwhelm hospital systems.

We also must ensure sufficient funding for our existing vaccine infrastructure to ensure children keep getting their regular vaccines, especially as states and localities consider reopening schools in the fall. We are concerned about reports of decreasing rates of routine immunizations among children, as parents may avoid non-emergency appointments and check-ups with their children's pediatricians. Efforts to build up a COVID-19 vaccine infrastructure must supplement, not supplant, existing vaccine infrastructure. In fact, more resources may be needed to keep up routine vaccination rates in the face of the challenges presented by COVID-19.

Thank you for your attention to this critical need as you negotiate the next COVID-19 package. Widespread vaccination will be critical to restoring our economy, getting people back to work, and returning to normal, and we look forward to working with you towards that goal.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jack Reed

Jack Reed
United States Senator

/s/ Susan M. Collins

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/ Jacky Rosen

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

/s/ Tina Smith

Tina Smith
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/ Jeanne Shaheen

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

/s/ Mazie K. Hirono

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

/s/ Brian Schatz

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

/s/ Dick Durbin

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/ Angus S. King, Jr.

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/ Thomas R. Carper

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher A. Coons

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

/s/ Gary C. Peters

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

/s/ Kyrsten Sinema

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/ Debbie Stabenow

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

/s/ Sheldon Whitehouse

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

/s/ Margaret Wood Hassan

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator