

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 5, 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

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

We write to urge Senate and House leadership to include our *Force to Fight COVID-19 Proposal* in the upcoming coronavirus relief package. Our comprehensive plan includes bipartisan, bicameral legislation that would address the dual health and economic toll of the coronavirus crisis by investing in jobs and health, and social services. The *Force to Fight COVID-19 Proposal* responds to immediate pandemic-related health challenges, creates community-based jobs and service opportunities to spur our economy, addresses the alarming racial and ethnic health disparities exacerbated by the pandemic, and strengthens our infrastructure to prepare America against future health threats. Congress must act to support the workforces required to fight COVID-19 and its broad consequences so Americans can get back to work, school, and their lives.

Every community in America is unique, and so too is each community response to the threats the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose. Our *Force to Fight COVID-19 Proposal* provides state and local governments with flexible funding to create hundreds of thousands of jobs and service positions within their own communities across the country. Americans need resources and coordination in order to save lives, end the pandemic, its broader social consequences, and get our lives to “normal.” In addition to critical COVID-19 testing and monitoring work, Congress must provide state and local governments with significant resources to strengthen the health care response in our overburdened hospitals and clinics, and build a community-based service workforce capable of tackling this pandemic and all future health challenges. We must create career pathways for young Americans disconnected from education and job opportunities, and who could be mobilized to fill critical functions in our COVID-19 response.

We are proposing an immediate “shot in the arm” to our health care response that will in turn accelerate our economic recovery. The American health and service workforce should be able to respond to public health and social emergencies as well as long-term public health needs across diverse communities to keep our economy open, productive, and successful. We will face future pandemics and other major health threats that harm our economy. If we do not learn from our experiences with the coronavirus pandemic, we will find ourselves closing down again as we

scramble to respond to the next great national health threat. Our *Force to Fight COVID-19 Proposal* would make our economy resilient and prepared to withstand national challenges like an infectious disease, a biological weapon, or future unknown health threats.

Our *Force to Fight COVID-19 Proposal* Force would address health inequities by investing in hard-hit communities and promoting representation in the health workforce among racial and ethnic minorities bearing the disproportionate burden of this pandemic. A more diverse workforce that recruits from and serves communities of color means a more developed pipeline for medical, nursing, and health professionals that results in a more inclusive health system.

The Force to Fight COVID-19 Proposal is composed of the following legislation, including bipartisan bills:

Public Health Service Legislation

- *The Health Force + Jobs to Fight COVID-19*: A federally funded, locally led, community-based public health workforce with core components of the Jobs to Fight COVID-19 Act.
- *National Coronavirus Monitoring Strategy (Coronavirus Containment Corps)*: A national strategy to boost and coordinate efforts to monitor and prevent COVID-19.
- *Resilience Force*: A FEMA CORE surge workforce to assist with supply chain logistics and emergency procurement of medical/PPE/testing supplies, support testing and contact tracing activities, and to carry out disaster preparedness and response functions.
- *Strengthening the Public Health Workforce*: Reauthorization and improvement of the Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program to provide education loan repayment assistance to people who work in a state, local, or Tribal public health department.

Clinical Health Service Legislation

- *Strengthening America's Health Care Readiness (Health Heroes 2020)*: A historic investment in the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and Nurse Corps programs to provide scholarship and loan repayment for the graduate education costs of tens of thousands of doctors, nurses, and other clinicians in order to help address health workforce shortages, medical disparities, and gaps in emergency preparedness that have been magnified by the pandemic.
- *Future Advancement of Academic Nursing (FAAN)*: A grant program for nursing education in rural, underserved areas, or minority serving institutions to enhance preparedness, quickly respond to public health emergencies and pandemics, enroll students underrepresented in the nursing workforce, and modernize nursing education and infrastructure.

National Service Legislation

- Strengthening and Expanding AmeriCorps: An expansion of social services-focused national service programs for a three-year period to their current authorization, extending opportunity to up to 250,000 Americans per year to combat food insecurity, assist educators, build capacity at community-based organizations, and help with COVID-19 recovery and response, while putting unemployed young Americans on a pathway to employment.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

_____/s/_____

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator

_____/s/_____

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

_____/s/_____

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

_____/s/_____

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator

_____/s/_____

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator