

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 3, 2020

Dr. Robert R. Redfield
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Director Redfield,

We write today to acknowledge the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) leadership thus far in responding to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus first identified in Wuhan, China and underscore the importance of state and local access to rapid diagnostic tests. CDC's efficient coordination with state and local officials, as well as its rapid development of a diagnostic tool, has thus far contained the spread of the virus on U.S. soil. According to CDC, "the immediate health risk from 2019-nCoV to the general American public is considered low at this time." However, given how rapidly this virus may spread, we agree with your assessment that local and state health jurisdictions must have the tools to detect and react to confirmed cases in real-time. We know that CDC is working to quickly distribute a rapid diagnostic test to state and local officials and urge CDC to do so as soon as possible, without compromising scientific validity. We further urge you to prioritize localities where cases have already been confirmed, so that additional cases may be detected in real-time.

CDC's response to this outbreak underscores the critical role it plays in protecting public health. Furthermore, it is a notable scientific achievement that CDC was able to develop a rapid diagnostic test for this novel virus just one week after publication of the viral genome sequence. This test has enabled health officials across the country to distinguish positive cases of this novel virus from other respiratory illnesses, allowing them to isolate patients to prevent further spread of the virus and deploy their resources where they are needed most.

However, all patient samples must currently be shipped to Atlanta, Georgia in order to be tested by CDC, which drastically increases the time it takes for local physicians and health officials to confirm these diagnoses. As the number of suspected cases rises, this will become an unsustainable bottleneck in the diagnostic pipeline that could hinder efforts to stop the spread of this disease. Therefore, CDC must continue to work quickly to distribute the rapid diagnostic test to state and local health officials. It is essential that local health care providers continue to devote their resources to those who are confirmed positive for the virus, and this is only possible if the test can be conducted locally and rapidly.

We understand that before the test can be distributed, it must meet stringent quality controls so that it is sensitive enough to accurately detect this novel virus and specific enough to provide confidence in the results. CDC should continue to work with the National Institutes of Health and private entities, where appropriate, to meet these important standards. Further, we urge CDC to coordinate with the Food and Drug Administration to secure an Emergency Use Authorization for the rapid diagnostic test as soon as possible.

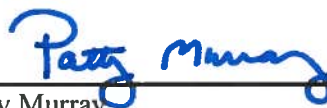
Finally, we strongly urge the CDC to prioritize states with confirmed cases of the novel virus to receive the first available test kits. These communities have an identified risk factor for further spread of the virus, and therefore health officials need all the tools at their disposal to rapidly detect and respond to new cases.

Thank you again for your timely response to the outbreak. We are eager to learn when the rapid diagnostic test will be available for use by state and local jurisdictions, and how priority will be determined for swift distribution.

Sincerely,



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



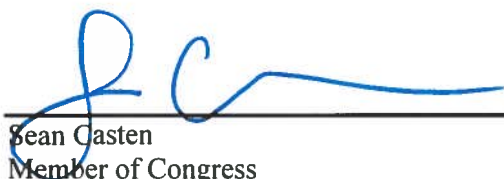
Patty Murray
United States Senator



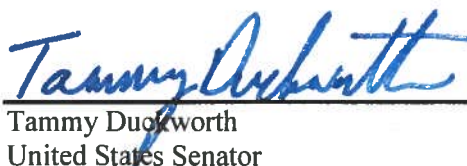
Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



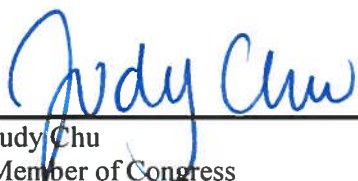
Maria Cantwell
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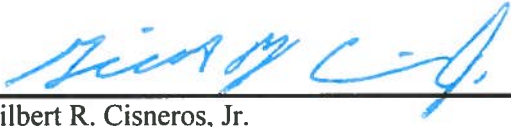
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



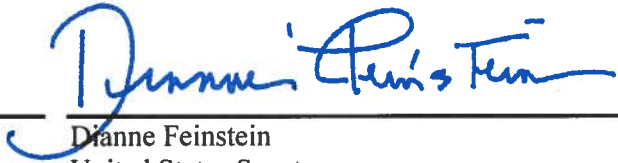
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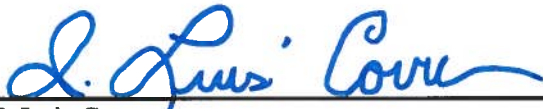
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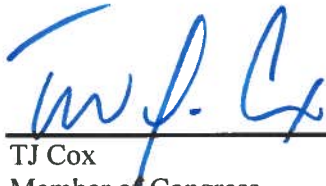
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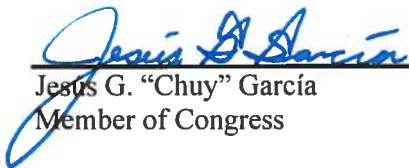
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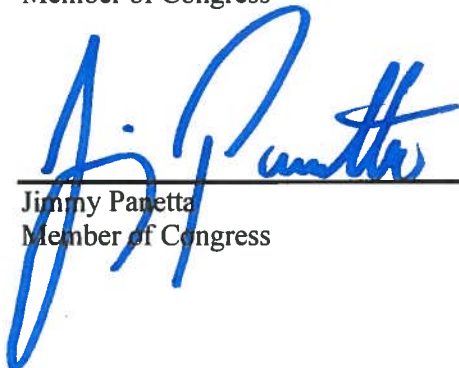
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Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



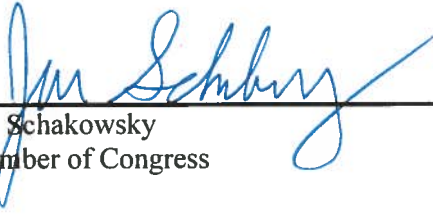
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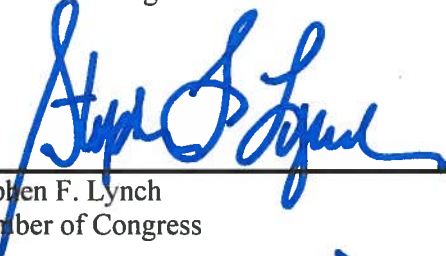
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