

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 25, 2020

Peter Gaynor
Administrator
U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St SW
Washington, DC 20472

Alex Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Administrator Gaynor and Secretary Azar:

We write to bring your urgent attention to recent requests from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) requesting personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical supplies including N95 respirator masks, surgical masks, nasal swabs, ventilators, face shields and gowns. New Hampshire hospitals and first responders expect a significant surge of coronavirus cases in the coming days and are running dangerously low on many critical supplies.

On March 16th, your agencies provided NH DHHS with a limited supply order to partially address a previous request from NH DHHS that was dated March 11, 2020. On March 17th, NH DHHS requested additional materials that health care providers in New Hampshire desperately need in order to meet the demand of the impending surge of coronavirus cases. Our understanding is that an error at the national supervisory level at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) resulted in the March 17th request sitting “unprocessed” for four days. This type of delay is unacceptable and puts the health of Granite Staters at risk.

Equally concerning, on Tuesday, when New Hampshire finally received supplies in response to the March 17th request, many of the supplies that the state received were expired and the 16,677 gloves that NH DHHS received were all latex gloves, which are unusable in the medical setting due to latex allergies. Even after accounting for the supplies included in this second shipment on Tuesday, FEMA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have fallen short in the total amount of supplies provided. Between these first two shipments combined, your agencies have only provided 28 percent of the total number of N95 respirator masks originally requested on March 11th, only one-third of nasal swabs needed, approximately 26 percent of the original request for surgical masks, and zero ventilators. NH DHHS recently increased its pending request from 15 ventilators to 45 ventilators.

Your agencies have focused on staging these shipments in a piecemeal fashion, so that by early April, the state will receive all of the supplies that it originally requested on March 11th. Health care providers from across New Hampshire are exasperated by this piecemeal approach, which has not afforded them the supplies they need. These providers also need a reliable partner in order to plan supply use based on expected shipments from the stockpile. Instead, FEMA and HHS’ efforts to date have proven unreliable, which has undermined the planning process.

Our state and our hospitals need guidance from this administration in order to plan for the escalation of coronavirus cases. Please provide a response and timeframe for the provision of additional supplies as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress