

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
Vice President of the United States
The White House
Office of the Vice President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Pence:

As you know, the Pacific Northwest, and Washington state specifically, has been the region most impacted by the outbreak of COVID-19. That is why we were pleased to see Secretary of Defense Mark Esper announce that he will be offering 2,000 ventilators to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The resources are especially needed in the Pacific Northwest which has disproportionately fewer ventilators than the rest of the country. The most recent data from HHS and the American Association for Respiratory Care found that Washington and Oregon only have 13 ventilators per 100,000 people and Idaho only has 12 ventilators per 100,000. Comparatively the state median number of ventilators per 100,000 people is 20.5.

Our hospitals across the region have grown more concerned that in a short time they will be overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients as intensive care unit capacity is reached. The number of ventilators is roughly equivalent to the number of intensive care unit (ICU) beds. Italy, which has had the worst COVID-19 outbreak outside of China, has 12.5 ICU beds per 100,000 people. We have seen reports that due to the limited number of ventilators and overwhelming number of patients, physicians in Italy have been forced to make the impossible decision of rationing which patients are more deserving of being saved.

We are alarmed by the parallels between Italy and the Pacific Northwest and urge you to prioritize states that have been the hardest hit and have the fewest ventilators per person. We appreciate the supplies that have been distributed from the National Strategic National Stockpile and remind you that the need for personal protective equipment (PPE) as well is dire in our region. Some hospitals are reporting that they have only enough PPE on hand to last a few more days.

Unfortunately, we fear that the existing availability of ventilators may prove to not be enough. According to an analysis published in Health Affairs projected that a possible 20.5 million Americans could require hospitalization due to COVID-19 and that that if the infection curve is

not flattened and the pandemic peaks over 6 months there would be a needs gap of 295,350 ICU beds. We urge the White House to convene every ventilator manufacturer with the purpose of developing a collective national manufacturing goal to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. The stories that have come out of Italy are heart wrenching but we are hopeful that with strategic decision making we can avoid a similar outcome.

Sincerely,



Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Mike Simpson
Member of Congress



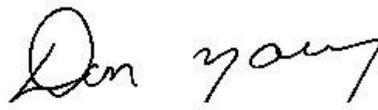
Kim Schrier, M.D.
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Peter A. DeFazio
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