Dear LTG Williams, Ambassador Lighthizer, Ambassador Branstad, and Dr. Beeman:

Having spoken with hospitals, doctors, health care providers, and emergency management coordinators across our districts over the last week as the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak spreads, we have heard concerns that the United States will experience a dire shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) if we do not act now.

Our health providers require PPE that includes N95 masks, ventilators, gloves, gowns, shoe covers, hand sanitizer, and other essential basic supplies to address this outbreak. While we are glad to see the President has authorized the Defense Production Act and that the Department of Defense is providing five million respirators, we remain concerned that this will not provide enough supplies in time.

The urgent public health situation we find ourselves in has made clear the vulnerabilities resulting from our existing supply and sourcing structures. That is why we are requesting you prioritize working with our trading partners to find essential medical equipment and PPE that is readily available and avoid placing any new red tape or restrictions on medical providers as they seek to obtain this equipment promptly from available sources. We continue to support American innovation in this space, including efforts to manufacture more PPE at home, to work with private industry to switch production to PPE wherever possible, and to encourage American innovators to develop new ways to address the shortage, such as creating new methods to safely and responsibly decontaminate PPE for reuse. Unfortunately, not enough PPE is domestically available for immediate use; despite the best efforts of industry and the Administration, we must turn to our international trading partners for a rapid response to the current pandemic. Additionally, we are committed to working within Congress and with the Administration on measures to improve our resilience and prevent this from happening in the future.
The limited supply of PPE available is hampering our ability to treat and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic across the country. Proper equipment will ensure that we can transfer non-COVID-19 patients from hospitals, freeing up bed space. It will ensure that our health care workforce stays healthy and ready to respond. And it will bring peace of mind to every American to know we are better prepared to handle this outbreak.

Thank you for your assistance on this matter. Please do not hesitate to reach out to our offices if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Cindy Axne
Member of Congress
Troy Balderson
Member of Congress

Also signed by the following Members of the House of Representatives:

Donald S. Beyer Jr.  Bob Gibbs  Mike Thompson
Sanford Bishop  Anthony Gonzalez  Norma J. Torres
Anthony G. Brown  Raúl M. Grijalva  Brad Schneider
Ken Calvert  Eleanor Holmes Norton  Terri A. Sewell
Matt Cartwright  Pramila Jayapal  Donna E. Shalala
Sean Casten  Andy Kim  Mike Sherrill
David N. Cicilline  Ron Kind  Albio Sires
Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.  Adam Kinzinger  Abigail D. Spanberger
Emanuel Cleaver  Darin LaHood  Thomas R. Suozzi
Steve Cohen  Connor Lamb  Xochitl Torres Small
TJ Cox  Barbara Lee  Jackie Speier
Angie Craig  Mike Levin  Haley M. Stevens
Jason Crow  Dave Loebsack  Steve Stivers
Judy Chu  Frank Lucas  Darren Soto
Madeleine Dean  Tom Malinowski  Michael R. Turner
Nanette Diaz Barragán  Ben McAdams  Rashid Tlaib
Veronica Escobar  James P. McGovern  Fred Upton
Dwight Evans  Jerry McNerney  Ann Wagner
Abby Finkenauer  Grace Meng  Peter Welch
Bill Foster  Paul Mitchell  Jennifer Wexton
Marcia L. Fudge  Stephanie Murphy  Susan Wild
Josh Harder  Ilhan Omar
Denny Heck  Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Tulsi Gabbard  Ed Perlmutter
Ruben Gallego  Dean Phillips
Jesús G. “Chuy” García  Chellie Pingree
Mary Gay Scanlon  Ayanna Pressley
Tim Ryan