

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Mr. President:

We urge you to immediately issue a nationwide “shelter-in-place” order in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. At the time of writing, 43,499 Americans in all 50 states have confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 537 have died. Worldwide, it has killed tens of thousands and sickened hundreds of thousands. There is no FDA-approved vaccine or treatment for COVID-19 and, without significant mitigating action, our already-strained health care system could be overwhelmed, leading to the deaths of tens of thousands more Americans.

Our current actions to stem the tide are not enough. The total number of COVID-19 cases and deaths have nearly doubled over the last 48 hours. At this rate, we will surpass one million confirmed cases and 13,000 deaths within the next ten days. Our health care system typically operates near full capacity and is already experiencing shortages of N95 masks, protective eye gear, and other necessary equipment to protect our doctors and nurses. An influx of this many patients, some of whom will require intensive care, will likely exceed our supply of hospital beds and ventilators, leading to rationing of care and more deaths.

To effectively slow COVID-19’s spread, we must issue a shelter-in-place order for the entire country lasting at least two weeks, excepting only travel for essential services like grocery stores and health care providers, and to and from the workplace for critical workers. California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin have already issued similar shelter-in-place orders. A national order would create minimum guidelines and requirements for each state to implement, with enforcement handled at the state level.

Given insufficient availability of mass testing and the ability for asymptomatic individuals to unknowingly spread the coronavirus, we must reduce person-to-person contact to the bare minimum. It is the only proven way we can limit the growth of confirmed cases, insulate our health care system, and prevent catastrophe.

There is no doubt that an action of this magnitude will temporarily disrupt daily lives and cause short-term economic pain, but it will help prevent an extended outbreak and response that could plunge us deep into a long-lasting recession. As soon as possible, Congress must vote remotely to pass an economic stimulus response bill that will save jobs, replace lost incomes, and lift up

all Americans. The cost of preventive action will save trillions of dollars in the long run and many priceless lives.

We must not hesitate. If we wait to act until the number of sick and dead reaches a certain threshold, then it will be too late. A state-by-state, locality-by-locality approach is not enough. Without action, the U.S. could end up like Italy, Spain, or worse. We thus urge you to immediately issue a nationwide shelter-in-place order.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ro Khanna". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Cosigned by:

Rep. Anthony G. Brown
Rep. Jim Cooper
Rep. Susan Davis
Rep. Veronica Escobar
Rep. Tulsi Gabbard
Rep. Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Rep. Vicente Gonzalez
Rep. Barbara Lee
Rep. Alan Lowenthal
Rep. Stephen F. Lynch
Rep. Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton
Rep. Mark Pocan
Rep. Jamie Raskin
Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon
Rep. José E. Serrano
Rep. Darren Soto
Rep. Rashida Tlaib
Rep. Lori Trahan

CC: The Honorable Michael R. Pence, Vice President of the United States
The Honorable Alex M. Azar, Secretary of Health and Human Services