

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

As Congress considers further legislation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to include support for our nation's first responders, especially fire and emergency medical services (EMS), who are serving on the frontlines of this outbreak. First responders are routinely in physical contact with potentially infected persons as pre-hospital health care providers. During this public health emergency, the continued work and support of our first responders is vital.

We understand firefighters and paramedics across the country are in short supply of the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) to guard against disease exposure.<sup>1</sup> First responders access to PPE, particularly N95 respirators, helps limit spread of the disease and ensures our nation's first responders remain healthy so they can continue to serve our communities. We urge you to bolster resources for fire and EMS departments so they can access PPE by increasing funding for emergency Assistance to Firefighter (AFG) grants and prioritizing delivery of these resources through the national strategic stockpile.

Fire and EMS personnel work in one of the highest risk occupations for COVID-19 exposure. However, first responders have faced severe testing shortages.<sup>2</sup> A dearth of testing has led many first responders to self-isolate or quarantine. This has left departments with staffing gaps that must be backfilled, often with increased use of overtime. Fire and EMS departments must be fully equipped to respond emergencies. We urge you increase funding for emergency Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants and direct the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to expeditiously disperse federal funds to departments in need. To ensure grant recipients can use SAFER grants for costs related current employee needs and overtime, we urge including language mandating the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to grant waivers to SAFER recipients for the ability to use funds for overtime, backfill needs, and employee retention in addition to hiring.

During a time of crisis, it is necessary communities can continue to rely on local first responders for protection and emergency response. Congress must ensure fire and EMS departments have

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.propublica.org/article/emergency-medical-responders-have-lacked-guidance-and-are-stretched-for-supplies-and-personnel-to-combat-coronavirus>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/03/15/business/economy/coronavirus-worker-risk.html>

access to PPE, testing, and receive much-needed staffing support so that our nation's first responders can operate at full capacity as we face the COVID-19 pandemic.

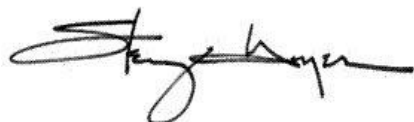
Sincerely,



Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Co-Chair, Fire Services Caucus



Peter T. King  
Co-Chair, Fire Services Caucus



Steny H. Hoyer  
Co-Chair, Fire Services Caucus



Mike Bost  
Co-Chair, Fire Services Caucus

Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly  
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Mike Doyle  
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Alan Lowenthal  
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Member of Congress

Andy Kim  
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Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress

Joseph P. Kennedy, II  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress

Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress

Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress

Abby Finkenauer  
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Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

Andy Levin  
Member of Congress

Al Green  
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings  
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David Trone  
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Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

Josh Gottheimer  
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Anthony Brindisi  
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress

Lee Zeldin  
Member of Congress

Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress

John B. Larson  
Member of Congress

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress

Susan W. Brooks  
Member of Congress

Sean Casten  
Member of Congress

Harley Rouda  
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress

Jesús G. “Chuy” García  
Member of Congress

Cindy Axne  
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress

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Brendan F. Boyle  
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Brad Sherman  
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Ilhan Omar  
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Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress

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Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress

Peter Welch  
Member of Congress

Max Rose  
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Tom Malinowski  
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Kathleen M. Rice  
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Susie Lee  
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Anna G. Eshoo  
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Elaine G. Luria  
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Ben Ray Lujan  
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Jerrold Nadler  
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Ben McAdams  
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