

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 7, 2020

Brigadier General Jemal J. Beale
Adjutant General
State of New Jersey
Department of Military & Veterans Affairs
P.O. Box 340
Trenton, NJ 08625-0340

Dr. Lisa J. Hou, D.O.
Deputy Adjutant General
New Jersey National Guard
Department of Military & Veterans Affairs
P.O. Box 340
Trenton, NJ 08625-0340

Dear Brigadier General Beale and Dr. Hou:

We write regarding the state-wide response to ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks in Long-Term Care (LTC) facilities across the state of New Jersey. We wish to echo the New Jersey Department of Health's request for the New Jersey National Guard (NJNG) to immediately deploy additional Guardsmen to reinforce civilian staffing shortages in LTC facilities statewide.

Title 32 of the U.S. Code authorizes the state of New Jersey to activate guardsmen under the command of the Governor and Adjutant General for a variety of missions, including helping maintain community-based testing sites and enhancing medical capacity. We are encouraged by the response and actions exhibited by the brave men and women of the NJNG during this time of crisis. As you know, Guardsmen were deployed to each of the three state-run veterans' homes where medics provided crucial assistance to civilian staff facing extreme staff shortages due to widespread infection of COVID-19. The additional medical staff provided by the NJNG provided to support for the states' two Community-Based Testing Sites and have been integral in establishing and maintaining the state's three field medical stations.

While we recognize that the NJNG is limited by the number of personnel necessary to operate and continue responding to the state's needs, we ask that NJNG dedicate additional personnel and resources to assist LTC facilities throughout the state with devastating ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks. Currently, there are 509 LTC facilities with outbreaks in the state; to date, 22,602 LTC residents have tested positive for COVID-19 cases and 4,151 deaths have been confirmed or presumed related to this disease. One LTC facility is reportedly experiencing so many deaths that it was reported that the facility was storing bodies in a makeshift morgue.¹ Communication

to family members and loved ones regarding the status of patients has been abysmal in many facilities and nursing homes.

New Jersey has made significant progress increasing the availability of personal protective equipment and the accessibility of universal testing. However, medical staffing shortages continue to persist across the state. These shortages are a largely a result of the number of COVID infected and exposed medical staff who are required to isolate or quarantine, respectively. LTC facilities need the additional support that NJNG can provide to prevent unnecessary infections and deaths.

We deeply appreciate the NJNG's response to COVID-19 thus far and look forward to working with you in our state's ongoing response. Thank you in advance for your reply.

Sincerely,



Bill Pascrell, Jr
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Donald M Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



Jefferson Van Drew
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress

¹ Sherman, T. (2020). This troubled nursing home has most deaths in N.J. but there were problems long before deadly outbreak. Retrieved from <https://www.nj.com/coronavirus/2020/05/this-troubled-nursing-home-has-most-deaths-in-nj-but-there-were-problems-long-before-deadly-outbreak.html>