

JOHN A. YARMUTH
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April 9, 2020

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As a Member of the Kentucky Congressional Delegation, I am writing with profound concern over the current supply chain for personal protective equipment (PPE) and the potentially dire consequences for our constituents. The effectiveness of our response to the Coronavirus pandemic directly depends on the effectiveness of our PPE supply chain. I, therefore, ask that you fully and more effectively invoke the Defense Production Act to ensure that our health care providers have a dependable source for these lifesaving supplies.

The most reliable and consistent source of our PPE for hospitals across the Commonwealth has been the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), but providers are only receiving a fraction of what they need. The private market is driven by high demand, low supply and panic in the market. As a result, hospitals across the country and even within the same state are bidding against each other, states are bidding against each other and against providers, and everyone is bidding for PPE that has increased in cost by as much as 1,000 percent. When providers do secure a contract, it is often redirected by FEMA at the last minute leaving the hospitals to start over in their search for urgently needed equipment. Providers cannot fairly compete for PPE when the federal government is bidding against them, willing to pay the highest price, and able to redirect contracts at any point. When providers are outbid for contracts with known suppliers, they are forced to turn to unknown brokers who often are unfamiliar with medical supplies at best or unscrupulous con-artists at worst.

This situation is untenable and risks the lives of our constituents. That is why I urge you to fully and more effectively invoke the DPA to drastically increase our supply of critical medical equipment. The DPA authorizes significant presidential authorities during public health emergencies, including calling on industries to assist in specific product production. I recognize that the federal government has taken some steps through the DPA to address supply shortages, but we have to do more. By harnessing the full power of our nation's manufacturing sector, you

will help our states and health care providers assemble the necessary equipment, medical devices, and testing materials needed to protect their workers and treat their patients. It is the only viable option to fixing our currently broken supply chain and ensuring our health care providers have the resources needed to respond to this crisis. This full DPA would only be for the short term until the private market can be restored after the peak of this pandemic.

Our nation's frontline health care providers have been working tirelessly to identify and treat the rapidly growing number of COVID-19 cases. We must do our part by ensuring that the federal government uses every option available to support their life-saving work. The lives of people in Kentucky and throughout the nation depend on it. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Yarmuth', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Yarmuth
Member of Congress