

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 17, 2020

The Honorable Mark T. Esper  
Secretary, Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

The Honorable Peter T. Gaynor  
Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency  
500 C Street S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Secretary Esper and Administrator Gaynor:

During this unprecedented crisis, we are writing in support of a whole-of-government response to overcome the challenges we now face.

The Department of Defense working with other civilian agencies, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), under the Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) mission is necessary to defeat the threats to our national safety and security posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are writing to urge you to utilize the DOD's manufacturing base – which exists for the very purpose of providing essential services during national defense contingency situations such as these – to provide much needed Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as masks, face shield, gowns, and glove, and medical equipment, such as ventilators.

Healthcare providers and workers from our home districts have urgent and ongoing requirements for PPE can and will not fulfill the demand for supplies. At the same time, defense department officials and leaders of our organic industrial base continue to express a strong willingness and readiness to use their facilities, expertise, and capabilities to meet the shortfalls in material and equipment.

In some cases, military facilities are ready to convert existing processes over to the manufacture of PPE or ventilator components. In other cases, installations have already used their tools, such as 3D printers, to make masks and face shields. In all these cases, we have heard that these commands lack the authority and approval they need in order to proceed any further. They cannot do anything more to help their local communities, their states, or the nation without direction from senior officials at the Department of Defense.

As we understand this issue, many military installations – especially those in the organic industrial base – find themselves in one of three different scenarios: 1) installations that are already making PPE but do not have the authority to distribute the materials outside of the military; 2) installations that have the capability to make PPE and other equipment but cannot get the authority to begin production; and 3) other installations that have yet to vet their ability to transition to production of PPE and medical components but that could be quickly outfitted to make these materials.

The Department of Defense has deferred to FEMA as the lead agent with regard to this matter. We urge you provide clear guidance and direction to military installations, especially to the organic industrial base, on how they can use their personnel, expertise, and capabilities to help address critical PPE and medical equipment shortages across our country.

We urge you unlock the full potential of the breadth of the resources and capabilities available at military installations across our country. The lives of our countrymen and women depend on it.

Sincerely,

Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress

Tom Cole  
Member of Congress

Members of Congress Co-Signatories

Pete Aguilar  
Anthony G. Brown  
André Carson  
Matt Cartwright  
Ed Case  
Sean Casten  
Joaquin Castro  
David N. Cicilline  
Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.  
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Raúl M. Grijalva  
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Tim Ryan  
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Darren Soto  
Abigail D. Spanberger  
Jackie Speier  
Thomas R. Suozzi  
Paul D. Tonko  
John Yarmuth