

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

April 15, 2020

Robert R. Redfield, M.D.  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Dr. Redfield:

We write today to urge you to establish an official coding or labeling system for the prioritization of COVID-19 tests. While some diagnostic labs have already established a process for providers to mark specimens for prioritization, laboratories need an overall standardized process to ensure COVID-19 tests are a priority. Our hospitals and health care providers are spending precious time and personal protective equipment (PPE) as they wait several days for COVID-19 testing results to arrive from commercial laboratories.

As you know, symptomatic patients of unknown status must be treated as COVID-19 positive. Inpatients of unknown status often spend several days in isolated negative pressure spaces, and health care staff must continue to wear PPE when interacting with these patients. The inability to distinguish COVID-19 positive patients from negative patients for days on end is a tremendous burden on the PPE supply as well as physical space in isolation areas. Supply and space are dwindling, ultimately putting the health of both patients and providers at risk.

Furthermore, we are now facing a crisis in hospital morgues. If a patient dies before receiving a result, he/she must remain in the hospital morgue until that result is returned. Our hospitals are now telling us they will need additional capacity in the morgue as the pandemic continues.

The emergence of testing centers in our state is putting even more pressure on commercial laboratories, despite their best efforts to increase capacity to keep pace with the pandemic.

Given the insurmountable challenge of laboratory capacity being outpaced by the number of cases, it is essential to establish a prioritization framework for both our health care providers and laboratories. The CDC recently established guidance for health care providers and testing facilities to prioritize who gets tested for COVID-19; while this is a great first step, health care

providers and testing centers still lack a way to communicate to laboratories the priority level of each sample. **There is currently no standardized way for health care providers and testing centers to label, code, or describe the samples that are sent to commercial laboratories.** The lack of this information prevents commercial laboratories from prioritizing, and compounds the strain on our local hospitals, healthcare providers, and PPE supply.

**We urge you to collaborate with laboratories in establishing a coding or labeling system to indicate which samples are which priority. Doing so would provide laboratories with a standardized process to obtain the information they need to process samples according to priority level.**

We look forward to your prompt reply on this very urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Mikie Sherrill  
Member of Congress



Robert Menendez  
United State Senator



Bill Pascrell, Jr  
Member of Congress



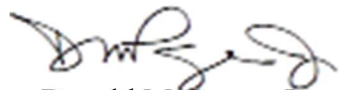
Cory A. Booker  
United State Senator



Albio Sires  
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr  
Member of Congress

/s/ Joe Neguse  
Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress