

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 31, 2020

Alex Azar
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20201

Rick A. Bright
Director
Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA)
200 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar and Director Bright,

We write to thank you for your efforts to encourage innovation in COVID-19 testing and response and to urge you to deploy these tests as rapidly and widely as possible once they are approved.

Restarting the economy after the coronavirus pandemic will take place only after a large fraction of the population is confident that they are immune to infection so that it is safe to work, travel, and return to normal life. This will happen when a proven vaccine is widely deployed, but this is likely more than a year away. In the meantime, much of our population, especially the young and minimally symptomatic, will have already acquired immunity to COVID-19, not through vaccination, but by getting infected and recovering. Most of those who recover will not be certain they had COVID-19, either because the symptoms were too mild, or because tests for the virus were unavailable at the time they were infected.

Fortunately, a so-called serological test that detect the immune system's response to a viral infection, including to COVID-19, could provide such a reasonable assurance. The simplest serological tests involve a finger-prick to deliver drops of blood to a disposable cartridge which can deliver an answer within minutes. No special equipment is needed, and tests like this could be readily obtained at doctor's offices or drive-thru test centers. It is imperative that serological tests be rapidly deployed to all Americans, so that the people who have acquired COVID-19 immunity can re-enter the work force and restart the economy.

We applaud the FDA for acting rapidly in granting provisional approval of the first of these tests¹, and BARDA for providing a funding opportunity² for ramping up manufacture. It is now

¹ <http://www.clpmag.com/2020/03/fda-allows-biomedomics-sars-cov-2-serology-tests-diagnostic-use/>

² <https://www.phe.gov/emergency/events/COVID19/Pages/business-barda.aspx>


vital that the U.S. does not drop the ball on coronavirus antibody testing since it tells us who can safely return to work. It will be an unnecessary economic tragedy if our citizens remain cowering at home because we failed to provide them with the simple, inexpensive means of proving their immunity. Each one of these inexpensive test kits can add many thousands of dollars to GDP by allowing someone who has recovered from COVID-19 to return to the productive economy.

We thank you again and urge you to deploy these serological tests as rapidly and widely as possible.

Sincerely,



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Mo Brooks
Member of Congress



Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress

Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Abigail D. Spanberger
Member of Congress

Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

Al Lawson
Member of Congress

Brenda Lawrence
Member of Congress

André Carson
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C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
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Andy Kim
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