



Janet T. Mills  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE  
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AUGUSTA, MAINE  
04333-0001

March 19, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pence  
Vice President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20501

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Vice President Pence and Secretary Azar,

I write today regarding the Federal government's approach to personal protective equipment and testing supplies as it relates to the ability of the State of Maine to prepare for and address COVID-19.

I appreciate the work of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), and other important Federal agencies to address COVID-19. Maine received a limited disbursement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) yesterday through the SNS. I am also grateful to Congress for passing and to the President for signing emergency supplemental funding to tackle this pandemic. I hope these funds will quickly flow to states as well as others working around the clock to contain COVID-19, although more support is needed. I am pleased the President has signed into law the Families First Coronavirus Response Act swiftly as well.

Despite these positive actions, Maine needs more PPE, respirators and testing material now. We placed an early order for PPE through a private manufacturer, but it has yet to be fulfilled. While Maine will continue to pursue other sources of PPE, we have exhausted the options within our control and are relying on the Federal government to meet this urgent need.

PPE is critical for both health professionals and first responders as they work on the front-lines to care for those who have, or are suspected of having, COVID-19. The demand has spiked as our case count has risen. The lack of sufficient PPE means that health care workers are not able to test patients, compounding existing problems arising out of a lack of testing kits. Every piece of PPE used by an individual who is conducting a test for COVID-19 is a piece of PPE that is not available to a health care worker who is treating that patient.



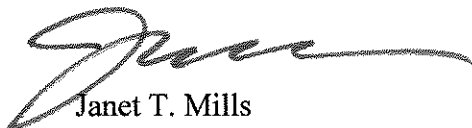
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The State of Maine requests that the Federal government expedite the release of PPE from the SNS as quickly as possible. In the setting of a national emergency, states should not have to struggle with equipping front-line providers with PPE given the supplies on hand at the SNS. At present, the demand from providers and first responders in our state will soon outstrip our available supply, even with the initial distribution. The sooner that SNS can distribute additional PPE, the sooner that the State of Maine can work with the health care system in Maine to distribute those supplies and ensure our readiness *before* our health care system experiences a surge in cases.

The availability of testing kits and testing reagents is also a challenge. Although Maine CDC currently has testing materials, we must stress the importance of a steady and reliable supply moving forward as the outbreak intensifies. As Governor, I ask for a plan that outlines how and when Federal agencies will release, distribute, and deliver further PPE supplies to Maine. I would also appreciate knowing how the limited supplies of PPE and testing materials will be allocated to states and how extensive those supplies are. Finally, I would like to know whether and to what degree the Federal government will consider the age of the populations in the states when making decisions about PPE and testing supply disbursement, given the fact that Maine has the oldest median age of any state in the nation.

I hope to receive answers to these critical questions as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Janet T. Mills  
Governor



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