



Dear Dr. Fox:

I write to follow up on your correspondence regarding the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), ventilators, and other health care supplies needed to respond to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

From the earliest stages of the COVID-19 outbreak in Rhode Island, I have been vigilant and persistent in trying to ensure Rhode Island's health care providers and workers have enough PPE. Even before Rhode Island's first confirmed case, I wrote to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration requesting that they work with the Rhode Island Department of Health on the procurement of additional PPE and essential medical supplies. I followed up with a similar request to the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response in the Department of Health and Human Services after the first Rhode Island diagnosis.

As the outbreak has spread further, I have continued pressing for increased production of PPE and more supplies for Rhode Island. I cosigned letters to the Administration first urging it to [invoke the Defense Protection Act](#) (DPA) to spur domestic PPE production, and I followed up when it inadequately and indefensibly

domestic PPE production, and I followed up when it inadequately and indefensibly [failed to quickly utilize this power](#). I also sent several letters to the Administration concerning the status and procurement of supplies, such as the enclosed letter I cosigned March 21 to the President and Vice President to request answers on the current supply of PPE and other critical medical equipment, as well as on plans to further augment their production. I expressed similar needs, and with a specific focus on Rhode Island, in a one-on-one [call with Vice President Pence](#).

To date, Congress has enacted three pieces of legislation to address the COVID-19 pandemic and provide relief to our health care system and its workforce. The Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental, which passed on March 5, included approximately \$500 million for procurement of pharmaceuticals, masks, PPE, and other medical supplies for distribution to state and local health agencies in areas with a shortage of medical supplies. The [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) built substantially on this investment, allocating \$16 billion to replenish the Strategic National Stockpile and providing \$1 billion for the DPA to help ramp up domestic production of medical supplies. It also created a \$100 billion fund to aid health care providers in their COVID-19 response, for uses including the purchase of PPE. Further, the \$1.25 billion Rhode Island receives from the Coronavirus Relief Fund may also be used for PPE.

Unfortunately, volunteerism and private sector partnerships can neither equal nor replace a comprehensive, efficient, and nationwide strategy to ensure that quality medical supplies are produced and effectively distributed to areas of critical need. Only a President has the broad

authority to do so, and for this reason, I joined some of my colleagues in [sending this letter](#) to the President to urge stronger federal leadership in the procurement of these life-saving materials.

In the past weeks, I have heard from hundreds of health care workers, providers, and facilities, as well as other concerned Rhode Islanders, on the need to supply our health care workforce with the essential and critical protective equipment to face this pandemic. Please be assured that your messages to me continue to inform my work on this vital issue.

Thank you for contacting me on this pressing matter, and I hope you and your loved ones are safe and healthy. Please do not hesitate to write, call, or visit my website in the future for information regarding this or any other matter.

Enclosure

Sincerely,

Jack Reed  
United States Senator