

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

June 26, 2020

Dear President Trump:

We write to express deep concerns with your Administration's announcement to end federal funding for testing sites in five states, including the State of Illinois.ⁱ The COVID-19 pandemic continues to devastate communities across our state and infections continue to spike nationwide. We urge you, in the strongest terms possible, to reverse this decision and instead increase, not rescind federal support for testing sites and testing capacity as Americans continue to die in record-high numbers during this pandemic.

Testing is critical to identify, effectively implement contact tracing, and ultimately slow the spread of COVID-19. In order to mitigate the public health threat that the virus poses, we must ramp up our testing capacity in hotspots, especially as states reopen and experience spikes in new cases. Rising cases over the past two weeks indicate that our country is failing to contain COVID-19. On Tuesday, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Dr. Anthony Fauci testified before the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, unequivocally stating that the United States is far from controlling the spread of the virus.ⁱⁱ

U.S. testing capacity has been a problem since the beginning of the crisis. To date, we lag behind other countries as we have only been able to test 9 percent, or 30 million people, in total over the last three months.ⁱⁱⁱ Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Assistant Secretary for Health Brett Giroir has said, "HHS will continue to increase testing capacity overall, and make it more accessible especially to underserved communities." However, pulling funding from community-based testing sites directly undermines that claim.^{iv} Once implemented, your inexplicable decision to close two of our state's community-based testing sites strips away 500 tests per day from our constituents.^v Though Governor Pritzker's Administration is already making provisions to ensure other sites can increase their capacity, it will cost our state nearly \$70,000 a day to perform and process these additional tests at a time when the state budget is extraordinarily tight and while your Administration has failed to disburse nearly \$14 billion in funds approved by Congress for the purposes of COVID-19 testing and contact tracing.^{vi}

It is your duty to lead and implement effective strategies to address and support states through this crisis. These proposed funding cuts represent a dereliction of that duty. While the State of Illinois has flattened the curve of COVID-19, our communities continue to have alarmingly high infection case-positivity rates. Without the support of the Administration, many states and local governments—including ours—may not have the resources or capacity to undertake the challenges of this pandemic.

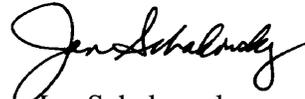
Your Administration's efforts to reduce testing are irresponsible and will ultimately lead to more deaths. Lack of testing will not make the virus disappear; it will only exacerbate our current public health crisis. We urge the administration to rescind its decision to end funding and instead support COVID-19 testing sites across the country.

Sincerely,

U.S. House Delegation



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress



Robin Kelly
Member of Congress



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Daniel W. Lipinski
Member of Congress



Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

U.S. Senate Delegation



Senator Richard J. Durbin



Senator Tammy Duckworth

CC: The Honorable Alex M. Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

ⁱ NBC News, “Trump administration to end federal support for COVID-19 testing sites,” June 24, 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/trump-administration-end-federal-support-covid-19-testing-sites-n1232063>.

ⁱⁱ [House Committee on Energy and Commerce](https://energycommerce.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/full-committee-hearing-on-oversight-of-the-trump-administrations), “Oversight of the Trump Administration’s Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic,” June 23, 2020, <https://energycommerce.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/full-committee-hearing-on-oversight-of-the-trump-administrations>.

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Testing Data in the U.S.,” <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/testing-in-us.html>.

^{iv} NBC News.

^v Analysis from the Illinois Department of Public Health.

^{vi} “On Heels Of President Trump’s Admission That He Directed Officials To Slow Testing To Keep Case Numbers Low And Amid Spike In COVID-19 Cases In Many States Across The Country, Sens. Schumer And Murray Reveal That HHS Has Yet To Spend Nearly \$14 Billion Congress Provided For Testing And Tracing, Call On HHS Sec. Azar And Trump Admin. To Immediately Disburse Unspent Funds,” June 21, 2020, <https://www.democrats.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/on-heels-of-president-trumps-admission-that-he-directed-officials-to-slow-testing-to-keep-case-numbers-low-and-amid-spike-in-covid-19-cases-in-many-states-across-the-country-sens-schumer-and-murray-reveal-that-hhs-has-yet-to-spend-nearly-14-billion-congress-provided-for-testing-and-tracing-call-on-hhs-sec-azar-and-trump-admin-to-immediately-disburse-unspent-funds>.