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April 3, 2020

The Honorable Chad Wolf  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
1880 2<sup>nd</sup> Street S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf,

We write during this extraordinary national health crisis to urge the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to deliver the stockpile of 1.5 million expired N95 respirator masks that U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has in storage to medical facilities hardest-hit by the COVID-19 virus. We are very concerned and disappointed with recent reporting in the Washington Post yesterday that DHS has decided to provide this protective gear to the Transportation Administration Agency (TSA) and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and we strongly urge you to reconsider. While we understand some of the masks may be needed for TSA agents, the remainder should be prioritized for our medical professionals who are on the frontline saving lives and fighting the COVID-19 virus and should be used in accordance with CDC's recommendations as outlined in the *Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of N95 Respirators*.

As our country continues to grapple with the frightening COVID-19 pandemic, over 230,000 people have been infected with the virus and over 5,000 have lost their lives. And our health experts warn us that the worst is yet to come. These numbers will continue to increase exponentially unless our state and federal governments are unified in their response. We need to ensure that our medical professionals have the appropriate equipment to minimize the spread of the virus and treat the patients who are infected. Ending the pandemic depends on this.

N95 respirator masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) are in short supply at the hardest-hit hospitals in states like New York, New Jersey, and California. There are reports of hospital staff reusing disposable masks for multiple patients and wearing improvised PPE including plastic sheet protectors, ski goggles, plastic garbage bags, and Halloween costumes to cover their faces while treating patients. This is unacceptable and unconscionable. We need to ensure that our medical professionals have the appropriate equipment to minimize the spread of the virus and treat the patients who are infected. Ending the pandemic depends on this.

On March 27, 2020 during a telebriefing for Members of Congress and Senators, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator Gaynor ensured us that the N95 respirator masks would be allocated to governors of the states where conditions are the worst, such as New York and New Jersey. However, it is clear that we were misled by DHS' assurances.

We demand that you honor the commitment by Administrator Gaynor on the Member call and assist our healthcare workers by distributing the N95 respirator masks to the providers who have the greatest need for them. Our healthcare workers are on the frontlines of this battle against COVID-19 and need the proper equipment to win this fight.

Sincerely,



NANETTE DIAZ BARRAGÁN  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



JOAQUIN CASTRO  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



RUBEN GALLEGO  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



ROSA DELAURO  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



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ILHAN OMAR  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



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SCOTT H. PETERS  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



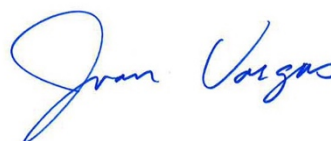
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BRAD SHERMAN  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



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JUAN VARGAS  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

ON BEHALF OF:

VERONICA ESCOBAR  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS