

United States Senate

January 31, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary, Chairman of the President's Taskforce on Novel Coronavirus
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

I am writing to request that the novel coronavirus taskforce communicate and coordinate with medical supply manufacturers to ensure that the United States has a medical supply strategy in place to address possible shortages in light of potential, further domestic spread of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). This week the World Health Organization declared the Wuhan coronavirus a global health emergency and the United States took subsequent steps to declare a domestic public health emergency. Due to China's significant manufacturing base and role in the medical supply chain, it is important that the United States is aware of what implications the outbreak that originated in Wuhan, China could have on our preparedness efforts and proactively work to address any potential shortfalls.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), this is a "novel (new)" coronavirus with China reporting approximately 9,800 human infections and 213 fatalities. The data suggests that "person-to-person spread" is occurring. To combat the spread, China has instituted what experts term an "unprecedented scale" for their quarantine which impacts over 50 million individuals. Both the outbreak itself and containment measures of this nature could serve as considerable threats to the medical supply chain, especially at a time of increased demand.

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continues to evaluate over one hundred potential cases in the United States, it is important that the country is prepared for increased medical supply demand. Due to the rapid nature of this outbreak, it is critical that the taskforce take proactive steps to evaluate both current, and potential future, demand for medical supplies in light of the inherent supply chain challenges. Based on news reports, companies like 3M that manufacture face masks have already increased their production in response to the outbreak.

I am grateful for the taskforce's leadership in public health preparedness and response and encourage a thoughtful, timely evaluation with manufacturers of current supply, potential future need, and strategies to address demand.

Sincerely,



Cory Gardner
United States Senator