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## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3903  
March 6, 2020

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Robert P. Kadlec, M.D.  
Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Room 638G  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Dr. Kadlec:

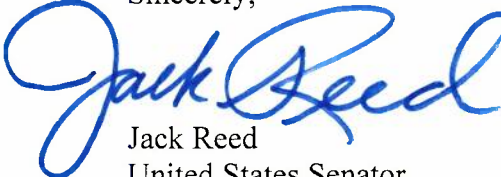
As it becomes increasingly evident that there will be broader spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) within the United States and in my home state of Rhode Island, I ask that you work with the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) to ensure the availability of personal protective equipment and other critical medical supplies to respond to COVID-19.

Over the last week, RIDOH announced its first cases of COVID-19 related to returning travelers from overseas. More positive cases are possible and indeed, extremely likely over the coming days and weeks. As evidenced by the care provided to these individuals, and in monitoring additional individuals who may have been exposed to COVID-19, we must ensure that health care professionals have the resources and supplies needed to take care of potential patients with COVID-19. Similarly, we must protect others from COVID-19 exposure, including patients who seek care unrelated to COVID-19, health care providers, and first responders.

Across the country, shortages have been reported of personal protective equipment, such as face masks. As the general public has been buying the products on the market, health care providers and state and local health departments are left with little ability to stock up on these products in advance of a potential pandemic within our borders. As such, RIDOH has reported shortages of many of these products and anticipates requesting additional supplies from the National Strategic Stockpile. I ask that you work with RIDOH to ensure that my state is able to procure sufficient supplies and approve any such request expeditiously.

We cannot wait until it is too late to secure sufficient supplies for our state and local health departments to be prepared for COVID-19 and any other health emergency. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jack Reed  
United States Senator