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March 16, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
Vice President of the United States
The White House
Washington DC 20500

Dear Vice President Pence:

I write to you, as leader of the White House Coronavirus Task Force, on behalf of the citizens of Puerto Rico who need access to the resources to fight the COVID-19 threat under the national state of emergency declared by the President.

Puerto Rico's health authorities and representatives of first responders, health care workers at all patient-contact levels, and personnel tasked with screening entry, have called attention to the limited supply of the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that is required to perform their duties safely. PPE is essential to save more lives, by protecting those who can intervene early with suspected or detected cases.

In our case, not only is our health care system still stressed after the multiple recent natural disasters, but our insular nature makes it even more critical to have adequate stocks at hand, since anything not made locally has to arrive through sea or air, increasing complexity and costs. I ask for urgent action to ensure a sufficient supply of PPE is provided right now to all the frontline staff in Puerto Rico, which is a border jurisdiction where there is a high potential for contact at points of entry from other affected locations.

In the effort to increase PPE production, Puerto Rico's tradition as a center of medical device and military equipment manufacturing make us potentially a great resource in the future to achieve American self-sufficiency, but the critical need is right now. I must call for Puerto Rico's needs to be attended to with the necessary sense of urgency the situation calls for.

I also ask that you make available to our local health care, public safety and law enforcement agencies and organizations all necessary guidance and information about resources to equip their staff adequately. I know our dedicated personnel on the ground will be eager to put that information and resources to the best use and to share with your team their experiences in the frontlines.

With your help I know we can tackle this threat, in Puerto Rico and across the nation, but time is of the essence. Thank you for your prompt attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Jennifer González Colón
Member of Congress, PR-At large