

Congress of the United States

May 26, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Republican Leader

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Senate Democratic Leader

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, Schumer, and McCarthy:

We strongly recommend that any subsequent bicameral legislation provide for a new national paid and volunteer workforce to conduct needed contact tracing for COVID-19 and other essential work. We believe this would be best accomplished by augmenting our existing national and community service programs, such as AmeriCorps and the Peace Corps, to assist in the national response to the coronavirus pandemic. We appreciate that the House's "HEROES Act" (H.R.6800) would provide \$75 billion for local public health officials to fund testing, contact tracing, and other activities necessary to effectively monitor and suppress COVID-19.

Public health experts estimate our nation will need a workforce of 300,000 or more contact tracers. We can meet that need by utilizing flexible hiring mechanisms that federal agencies currently have and by adding new authorities to build the health capacity of state, territorial, local, and tribal governments to combat COVID-19. Like under existing national and community service programs, we believe any national volunteer workforce for contact tracing should receive stipends commensurate with their service and to cover living expenses. We introduced legislation to provide this needed workforce for contact tracing and to engage our nation's volunteers in this meaningful work:

- *Undertaking National Initiatives to Tackle Epidemic (UNITE) Act of 2020*
- *Utilizing and Supporting Evacuated Peace Corps Volunteers Act*

As state and local public health officials work in earnest to scale up testing and contact tracing for coronavirus, the federal government must provide additional support. We believe our national and community service programs are uniquely positioned to fill this need by providing a dedicated, capable workforce ready for deployment. Our legislation should inform any subsequent coronavirus-response legislation.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration. We stand ready to support any effort to bring new federal resources to bear for increased contact tracing nationwide.

Sincerely,



JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress



DEAN PHILLIPS
Member of Congress