

JAY INSLEE
Governor



STATE OF WASHINGTON
Office of the Governor

April 21, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pence
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Vice President:

Thank you for your continued open line of communication, which has helped my state in several ways. We share your goal of a safe return to normal social and economic activity over time. Individuals, families, businesses, and communities are counting on leaders at all levels to work together to ensure this process is carried out in a manner that keeps the public safe and minimizes the risk of viral resurgence.

This recovery can only happen safely, however, with the assurance of a strong national testing system that does not exist today. I am concerned by the view expressed by several Administration officials on April 20, 2020, that testing in the U.S. is already adequate for states to begin initiating recovery plans. Simply put, this view is not consistent with facts on the ground. Scientists are indicating that testing levels must significantly grow over the coming weeks — reaching volumes not possible with current resources — before we can responsibly modify interventions that remain our best defense against the virus. I am writing to request the federal assistance that is necessary to develop a robust national testing system that will enable a safe return to public life amid COVID-19.

Our testing system is only as strong as its weakest link. On April 20, your Administration provided governors with a list of in-state laboratories in an attempt to illustrate states' apparent existing capacity. But this does nothing to answer the repeated calls from governors to address the lack of swabs, viral transport media, reagents, and other supplies and personnel needed to take advantage of that lab capacity. My state, for example, is working to procure 2.5 million test collection kits to support optimal testing levels, but we are nowhere near that today. Just as a driver cannot travel their full distance on a quarter-tank of gas, we cannot unlock the full capacity of our labs without additional testing supplies and infrastructure from the federal government.



In order to rapidly build the robust testing system that we need, the federal government should:

- Provide significant, flexible emergency funding to rapidly accelerate the under-funded testing system, create a new at-home testing program for those without access to reliable transportation, and support small laboratories that are still facing significant constraints.
- Assure an adequate supply of collection swabs and viral transport media or saline media production and distribution, including usage of Defense Production Act to mandate the manufacturing of swabs by additional producers.
- Ensure the supply chain of additional high-throughput testing platforms, and the reagent supplies to use them, are at full capacity.
- Standardize the process of laboratory analysis, including by setting a standard price for all molecular, viral PCR and laboratory tests, and mandating a universal requisition form for all laboratories to accept.
- Create or scale systems that support secure HIPAA-compliant closed loop information exchange between patients, their providers, labs, and Public Health.
- Create backstop capacity to ensure fair access to testing for vulnerable communities experiencing barriers to testing, including rural communities, communities with language barriers, and communities that are under-insured or otherwise underserved by the health system.
- Provide validation, authorization, and guidance for safe and accurate home self-swab testing, and consider other regulatory options for expanding rapid testing options.
- Conduct additional surveillance testing nationally to probe for hotspots, focusing on states with lower levels of testing.
- Validate and assess role for serological tests.

Again, I want to thank you for the opportunity to discuss these and other matters, but I thought it important to communicate the dire need we are facing in the state of Washington. I look forward to further cooperation with your office to build the national testing resources that will allow a safe and responsible economic recovery.

Very truly yours,



Jay Inslee
Governor