

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 9, 2020

Vice President Mike Pence  
Chairman, White House Coronavirus Task Force  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Pence,

As our nation continues to face unprecedented challenges from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we urge you to provide more transparency to states as they seek the lifesaving equipment that is desperately needed to combat this disease. In Colorado, and in states across the country, there have been reports of the federal government intercepting shipments of medical supplies ordered by local communities. Therefore, we request that you promptly clarify the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) supply chain management process to ensure that communities can receive necessary resources.

Our home state of Colorado is emerging as a COVID-19 hotspot. Currently, there are more than 5,000 confirmed cases in the state, however, public health officials estimate there are approximately 17,000-18,000 cases. Over 150 people have died in Colorado alone. Concerningly, state models used by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) have indicated that COVID-19 has not yet reached its peak in the state.<sup>1</sup> As the peak is estimated to occur between May and September, Colorado will likely face incredible challenges in acquiring the needed medical supplies such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators to treat a large influx of patients. In the worst-case scenario, Colorado could be short as many as 10,000 ventilators.<sup>2</sup>

As the state continues to prepare for this worst-case scenario and ensure that our hospitals, emergency responders, and public health officials have the supplies they need, it is critical that FEMA work closely to coordinate and communicate with state officials to ensure that ordered supplies are successfully delivered to the communities purchasing them. Therefore, it is deeply concerning that local orders for PPE, ventilators, and other medical equipment have been intercepted and diverted by FEMA, with little to no explanation to local communities—causing much confusion and frustration.<sup>3</sup>

While FEMA claims it is prioritizing supplies for the communities most severely impacted according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), we are concerned that state-level data is not adequately taken into account.<sup>4</sup> National models, such as those created at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, may indicate that Colorado has

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.denverpost.com/2020/04/07/colorado-coronavirus-covid-model-predictions/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.denverpost.com/2020/04/05/colorado-ventilators-coronavirus-covid/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.denverpost.com/2020/04/04/coronavirus-colorado-polis-ventilators-fema/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/us/politics/coronavirus-fema-medical-supplies.html>

already reached its peak for hospital bed use, but state-level data indicates that this is not the case.<sup>5,6</sup> Therefore, it is imperative that FEMA both utilize this state-level data and provide transparency in the data it is using to justify the diversion of resources.

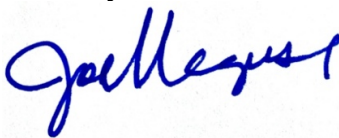
States desperately need transparency on the part of the federal government, as every second in this outbreak counts. In order to adequately protect our frontline workers and save as many lives as possible, there must be confidence that orders for medical supplies will not be diverted at a moment's notice. We owe it to our frontline healthcare and emergency responders to provide the peace of mind that when their local and state officials order supplies, they will arrive. We must do more to support our local communities.

Therefore, we urgently request that you provide the following information to clarify FEMA's supply distribution process:

1. FEMA's current inventory of medical supplies including PPE and ventilators;
2. Guidelines and data FEMA is using to determine which states are prioritized;
3. Guidelines and data FEMA is using to determine what supplies are being intercepted and diverted away from local communities;
4. A list of where supplies have been diverted, the reason for doing so, and when those local communities can expect to get their orders filled in the future;
5. Clarity for state and local officials regarding whether they should expect FEMA to purchase all supplies and distribute them, or if states should move forward with purchasing supplies;
6. Clarity for state and local officials regarding how FEMA will communicate with them and provide an explanation in the case of supply diversions.

We appreciate FEMA's recent award of \$16.7 million to the state of Colorado for the purposes of purchasing critical supplies<sup>7</sup>. However, more needs to be done to facilitate strong coordination between FEMA and state governments to ensure these funds are used effectively. We understand that our current circumstances are extraordinary. They demand a commitment to addressing local needs more rapidly than ever before. Put simply, lives depend on it. As we continue to battle this pandemic, our success relies on strong communication and transparency between all levels of government. We appreciate your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress

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<sup>5</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/19ST3tRnntUGV3h7YI0tQHJDnCoL5dRE7/view>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.denverpost.com/2020/04/07/colorado-coronavirus-covid-model-predictions/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2020/04/07/fema-awards-colorado-nearly-167-million-coronavirus-response-efforts>



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