



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

March 17, 2020

PHILIP D. MURPHY
GOVERNOR

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As Coronavirus-19 continues to spread throughout the State of New Jersey, it is clear that our health care system will be severely overburdened very soon. Individuals who experience severe symptoms associated with coronavirus, particularly the elderly and those with other medical conditions, often require hospitalization and the assistance of ventilators to continue breathing.

Currently, there are approximately 23,000 hospital beds in the State of New Jersey across 71 hospitals, with 55 percent of those beds occupied. Approximately 2,000 of those beds are critical care unit beds. This only appears to be a fraction of the capacity that will be needed as Coronavirus-19 spreads through the New Jersey population. Estimates from The Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs at Rutgers-Camden suggest that New Jersey could be facing a peak shortfall of anywhere from 123,000 to 313,000 hospital beds, sometime between May and October. Our Department of Health projects that just within the next two weeks, we may need an additional 2,000 critical care beds, with 10 percent of these beds needing ventilators. Should these projections materialize in the coming weeks and months, doctors and health care employees in New Jersey may be forced to make the agonizing decisions that the world has seen in Northern Italy – they will have no choice but to deny lifesaving care, including ventilators, to those in need of it.

We must do everything in our power to prevent these awful situations from happening here in America. I write to you formally requesting the assistance of the United States military and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to assist our efforts in expanding hospital and intensive care unit capacity. In your White House briefing this morning, you noted that the Army Corps was “ready, willing, and able” to pursue such efforts, and that you were starting the process for them to do so. This public health crisis is a direct threat to our national security and the safety of

our people, and the Northeast region, which is the densest region by population in America, is the most susceptible to a virus that rapidly transmits among individuals. By working together to identify buildings that can serve as facilities to provide emergency and intensive care, we can save many thousands of lives.

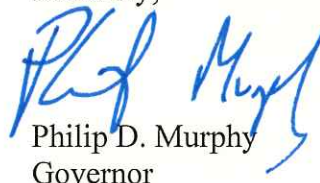
Additionally, we will do everything possible in New Jersey to slow the community spread of Coronavirus-19. Yesterday, I signed an executive order imposing extraordinarily strong social distancing measures. Among other things, the order requires 1) a limit of 50 people for all gatherings, with limited exceptions; 2) the indefinite closure of all pre-K, K-12, and higher educational institutions for in-person instruction effective tomorrow, Wednesday, March 18; 3) the indefinite closure of all casinos, racetracks, gyms and fitness centers, movie theaters, concert venues, and nightclubs; 4) the closure of all other non-essential retail, recreational, and entertainment businesses outside the hours of 5 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and 5) a requirement limiting all restaurants to delivery and takeout services only. Neighboring states, including New York, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania, have taken similar steps.

While I am confident that these efforts will slow the spread of Coronavirus-19 in New Jersey, it is clear that this virus will nonetheless continue to spread and that we must immediately expand the capacity of our health care system. I have mobilized my State's National Guard, who are currently working on efforts to expand our hospital infrastructure. At my direction, New Jersey's Commissioner of Health, Judith Persichilli, is in constant communication and is working closely with our hospitals, who have been extraordinarily helpful partners in our efforts. Commissioner Persichilli is currently in negotiations with four hospitals to reopen closed wings, and she is examining the feasibility of reopening a shuttered hospital. Yet these actions alone will not be sufficient. We are doing everything we can in New Jersey, but we need help from the federal government, which is why I am requesting that the United States military and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers assist our efforts to expand the capacity of our health care system.

Additionally, even as we identify and secure additional facilities, those efforts will be futile unless we have the personal protective equipment needed to allow health care workers to operate and the ventilators that are needed to treat patients. I urge you to assist us as we seek to rapidly expand these critical supplies.

Thank you for your consideration, and for the assistance your administration has already provided to our State as we face these unprecedented challenges. I stand ready to work with you and your administration in any way that will help protect the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of New Jersey.

Sincerely,


Philip D. Murphy
Governor