

ANTONIO DELGADO
19TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

1007 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5614

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3219

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AND ENVIRONMENT

March 18, 2020

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

Dear President Trump,

As you know, New York has the highest number of confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) cases in the country. Out of grave concern for the welfare of my constituents, I ask that you immediately authorize the Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) to assist New York State in expanding its medical capacity and task the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) with identifying critical shortage areas that need additional healthcare infrastructure.

Public health officials warn that our state could soon face a dramatic shortage of hospital beds and intensive care units (ICUs). New York currently has 53,000 hospital beds and 3,000 ICU units. Projections show that when the virus peaks (expected within 45 days), as many as 55,000 to 110,000 hospital beds will be needed in addition to 18,600 to 37,200 ICU units. This shortfall calls for urgent action.

As the representative for one of the most rural congressional districts in the country, I am gravely concerned about the impact of this shortfall on my constituents. Many rural, upstate communities lack access to basic health services under the best of circumstances. In the face of a global pandemic, New Yorkers across the state will suffer from a lack of hospital beds and ICU units, but shortages will be felt particularly acutely in rural communities like mine that already suffer from a lack of medical infrastructure.

While your decision to invoke the Defense Production Act to address the staggering shortage of masks and other protective medical gear is a step in the right direction, meeting the medical challenges of this pandemic will require a bold and well-coordinated multi-agency response. That is why I urge you to immediately direct HHS to work with state Departments of Health to identify critical shortage areas where medical capacity must be expanded.

Simultaneously, we must ensure that the Army Corps, under the direction of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, expeditiously begin planning activities to provide for these much-needed alternate medical facilities. It is essential that this planning phase is completed as quickly as possible, and that no resource is spared to execute its findings.

I appreciate your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

ANTONIO DELGADO
Member of Congress