

AMI BERA, M.D.  
7<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS:

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SPACE



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

WASHINGTON OFFICE  
1727 LONGWORTH HOUSE  
OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
PHONE: (202) 225-5716  
FAX: (202) 226-1298

DISTRICT OFFICE  
8950 CAL. CENTER DRIVE  
BUILDING 3, SUITE 100  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95826  
PHONE: (916) 635-0505  
FAX: (916) 635-0514

HTTP://WWW.BERA.HOUSE.GOV  
AMI.BERA@MAIL.HOUSE.GOV

April 14, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi,

Thank you for your strong support of the domestic and international response to COVID-19.

Much of the recent work Congress has undertaken has been the immediate response, including ensuring adequate supplies and economic assistance for families and small businesses here in the United States. While we do that important work, however, we also must be looking ahead to what needs to be in place, both domestically and globally, in the near future when communities start unwinding from these strict physical distancing measures. To that end, I ask that future legislation related to COVID-19 response include the provisions below.

Domestic Response

- **Develop a national testing strategy, including ensuring states continue to have enough testing supplies.** The CDC, in cooperation with states and localities as well as FEMA, ASPR, and other related agencies, should be directed to develop a plan to ensure every individual who needs a test gets one. This strategy should also ramp up the research, development, and distribution of serologic testing and include a plan to work with stakeholders to guide the country on how this testing should be used. There are many scientific, legal, and ethical questions that must be discussed now if these tests are used to determine how communities can reopen. As states and regions are already beginning to tackle these questions, federal guidance and resources are necessary.
- **Establish and provide funds for a COVID-19 Response Corps.** We will not be able to defeat community spread of the virus without the ability to enact widespread contact tracing, and other labor-intensive public health activities. We need to establish a readily trained workforce able to tackle these tasks. The Corporation for National and Community Service could recruit current and former AmeriCorps and Peace Corps members and could leverage an extensive network of service organizations nationwide to support our strained public health departments. These individuals could be plugged directly into communities through the CDC or with existing organizations, such as the Medical Reserve Corps.

## Strengthening Global Health Systems

COVID-19 is also putting major stress on the global health system and risks damaging our diplomatic relationships and democratic values as well as global security and the economy. Even if the U.S. is able to contain COVID-19 here at home, we risk continued outbreaks if we are not able to contain it elsewhere. We must break this cycle of panic and neglect when it comes to emerging infectious disease outbreaks worldwide.

In the coming months, the U.S. must work with global partners to strengthen our collective response to pandemics and the negative spillover effects impacting many abroad, which could have further damage on our national security interests and values.

Internationally, Congress and the administration should:

- **Provide continued support for global health security programs and systems.** Support for USAID and CDC's global health programs are critical to ensuring countries can prepare, detect, and respond to disease outbreaks, particularly those with pandemic potential. I am concerned by funding shortfalls at USAID, especially as the virus spreads to the global south. We should assess countries most at-risk for pandemics, and should provide adequate support to bolster systems in countries that will partner with us.
- **Support a Global Health Security Challenge Fund.** As this pandemic demonstrates, countries continue to have major gaps in their ability to prepare, detect, and respond to emerging infectious diseases. A new fund, as recommended by the bipartisan CSIS Commission on Strengthening America's Health Security, should be dedicated to improving capabilities of low and lower-middle-income countries with weak health systems to detect and respond to COVID-19 and prevent the next pandemic. The Fund would coordinate and align global health security financing from international donors and private sector actors, challenge other public and private sector donors to step up and match the U.S. contribution, and help to build sustainable capacity and prevent the next outbreak from becoming a pandemic.
- **Authorize and appropriate funding for the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI).** I recently introduced legislation co-sponsored by Representative Ted Yoho to authorize U.S. participation in CEPI, which would leverage U.S. investments in efforts to find a COVID-19 vaccine. We will not be able to fully return to normal until we develop a vaccine.
- **Prioritize USAID's efforts to provide low-cost medical equipment and PPE for developing countries.** As countries grapple with COVID-19, we will need to determine how we can ensure countries receive medical supplies in a way that is fair, equitable, and coordinated to limit the impacts of COVID-19.
- **Extend appropriations for the PREDICT program.** USAID's PREDICT program builds platforms for viral surveillance and for identifying and monitoring zoonotic pathogens around the world. Congress should ensure the program continues to receive support.
- **Ensure USAID and CDC personnel are supported both domestically and internationally as it responds to this crisis.** They deserve proper resources to address COVID-19 and other global health challenges exacerbated by the pandemic.
- **Mandate senior White House leadership to coordinate domestic and international preparedness and response to infectious disease outbreaks and pandemics like COVID-**

19. Coordination is critical, which is why future legislation should include the Global Health Security Act, which requires the establishment of this position.

- **Prioritize U.S. diplomatic efforts and partnership with international organizations to defeat COVID-19.** We will not be able to do this on our own. Working with other countries, and with international organizations like the WHO will be the only way to defeat COVID-19.
- **Facilitate private and public sector cooperation to defeat COVID-19.** Both corporations and private foundations will have a major role to play in mitigating the harm of the outbreak and bringing it to an end. The U.S. should support these efforts by facilitating their incorporation into U.S. and multilateral efforts.
- **Prioritize and coordinate international bioengagement programs at the Departments of State and Defense.** These programs have been underfunded and underutilized under this administration but will be critical to fighting back the virus. This work, which includes strengthening safe and secure disease detection capacity and the ability to detect COVID at country borders, will be critical to mitigating its spread.

As COVID-19 continues to spread throughout the world, we need to consider the development and humanitarian damage the virus will have. It is critical that we continue to support bilateral and multilateral mechanisms that support global health diplomacy, as well as humanitarian assistance and organizations such as UNHCR, UNICEF, and others. We should also ensure that countries are not taking advantage of the crisis to impose authoritarian values and curtail individual and minority rights.

While we are still in the middle of this crisis, we will also need to consider how to ultimately end the outbreak and prevent subsequent waves of infection. That will only come through the basics of prevention, detection, and response, and vaccine and countermeasure development. These building blocks can only be achieved through cooperation and support internationally, through organizations like the Global Health Security Agenda, and domestically, through strong and coordinated state, local, and federal leadership.

The United States has never shrunk from tackling these existential challenges before, either at home or abroad. We can do so again.

I look forward to working with you and Speaker Pelosi to advance these ideas and protect Americans and citizens around the world from COVID-19. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Ami Bera, M.D.  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and Nonproliferation  
House Foreign Affairs

Cc:

Vice President Mike Pence  
White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Deborah Birx