

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
324 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3361
FAX: (202) 225-3462



FLAGSTAFF OFFICE:
405 N. BEAVER ST., SUITE 6
FLAGSTAFF, AZ 86001
(928) 286-5338
FAX: (928) 779-6310

CASA GRANDE OFFICE:
211 N. FLORENCE ST., SUITE 1
CASA GRANDE, AZ 85122
(520) 316-0839
FAX: (520) 316-0842

TOM O'HALLERAN

1ST DISTRICT, ARIZONA

May 6, 2020

Vice President Pence
Office of the Vice President
Room S-212, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Vice President Pence,

I am writing today to share my concerns with the *Testing Blueprint* that was released jointly by the White House, Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Monday, April 27. While informative, the Testing Blueprint fails to articulate how the government will adequately scale and deploy COVID-19 testing, antibody testing, and contact tracing resources to deal with potential “hot spots.”

For many areas of the country, the growth in COVID-19 cases continues to rise despite stringent social distancing measures. We are already seeing state and local elected officials begin to formulate and implement plans to reopen their states or localities. I fear that, without substantial federal government investment and oversight, COVID-19 will return and place significant strains on our health system, our economy, and our way of life.

The government must set a clear definition of a “hot spot” and explain what that will mean in terms of deployment of government resources, including additional testing kits and contact tracers. Failure to do so will result in the virus returning unabated through many communities, including rural, tribal, and underserved communities. We are currently seeing this virus devastate the Navajo Nation which is placing a significant strain on our IHS facilities, 638 hospitals, and other rural health facilities.

We have already seen intense competition between states, localities, tribes, and federal agencies for N95 masks, testing kits, and other protective personal equipment (PPE). This is driving up the prices for these items and forcing state and local officials to focus on building supply chains instead of supporting their essential workers, hiring contact tracers, and establishing protocol to ensure that we can safely reopen America.

To this end, I would like responses to the following:

- 1) How will the White House and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) define a “hot spot”?
- 2) When a hot spot is identified and defined, what specific resources in terms of PPE, COVID-19 testing kits, antibody kits, and contact tracers will the federal government provide impacted state, county, tribal, and local officials?
- 3) What is the government’s plan to properly scale the number of COVID-19 testing kits, antibody tests, and contact tracers to safely reopen the economy without worsening the pandemic?

By placing the responsibility of creating widespread COVID-19 testing, antibody testing, and contact tracing programs on overextended State, County, Local, and Tribal governments, we are only likely to prolong this crisis. I urge you to reconsider and ensure that the United States government leads the response, instead of relying on many differently resourced and disparate State, County, Local, and Tribal governments to scale up much-needed testing capacity. This is the only way that we can allow Americans to get back to work, get back to school, and begin to see a return to normalcy.

Sincerely,



Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress