

Louisiana Primary Care Association, Inc.
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April 6, 2020

Governor John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

RE: Personal Protective Equipment Needs for Louisiana Community Health Centers

Dear Governor Edwards,

As you know, Louisiana's Federally Qualified Health Centers (commonly referred to as Community Health Centers) have served the healthcare needs of our state's most vulnerable communities for decades. In 2018 alone, Louisiana's health centers served over 444,000 individual patients. Aside from primary care, oral, and behavioral health services, health centers have always been an essential component of our state's emergency response and recovery plan. From hurricanes and other natural disasters to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Louisiana's Community Health Centers have always answered the call and responded in times of need.

Now, as our state enters the most critical phase of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Louisiana's Community Health Centers have again sprung to action. Many are quite literally serving on the frontlines by conducting COVID-19 testing on-site. All health centers are supporting the work of Louisiana's hospitals by addressing the rising demand for care, assessing patient symptoms, and helping in conducting triage. Health centers, already known for their efficiency and innovation, have quickly redesigned clinical protocols, rearranged their facilities, and are engaging in telehealth services to care for their patients while keeping them safe from exposure.

Like all providers serving on the front lines, Louisiana's Community Health Centers are in dire need of protective supplies and equipment. As FEMA coordinates the management of this disaster at the federal level, I urge you to strategically direct and prioritize protective supplies and equipment for the use of Community Health Center staff members on the ground. They are especially in need of N95 protective masks, face shields, and gowns.

The National Association of Community Health Centers – our national voice for Community Health Centers – has delivered a letter to the FEMA Administrator Peter Gaynor and Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar echoing this call. Without directing and prioritizing these needed supplies to our health centers and patients, we run the risk of completely overwhelming Louisiana's already stretched hospital system.

We respectfully ask that Community Health Centers be made a priority in the disbursement of personal protective equipment. The safety and well-being of our health center employees and patients are our highest priority.

Sincerely,



Gerrelde Davis
Executive Director



Mike Andry
Board President

CC: Louisiana Department of Health
National Association of Community Health Centers