

April 2, 2020

Via Email

U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: USW supports S. 3568, The Medical Supply Chain Emergency Act of 2020

Dear Senator:

In this time of crisis and economic hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic it is vital that the U.S. Federal Government ensure critically needed medical supplies are produced and delivered in a rapid, efficient manner. That is why, on behalf of the 850,000 members of the United Steelworkers (USW), I urge you to support **S. 3568, The Medical Supply Chain Emergency Act of 2020**.

Introduced by Senators Chris Murphy (D-CT) and Brian Schatz (D-HI), this legislative proposal will require the federal government to utilize the Defense Production Act (DPA) to ramp up manufacturing of critically needed medical supplies for the fight against the global pandemic of COVID-19.

The USW represents nearly 60,000 healthcare workers, and our members know all too well the shortages of supplies on the front lines of this fight. We are reading and receiving reports from our members in healthcare who are being forced to wear bandanas and scarves for masks, trash bags for gowns, and inappropriately reuse disposable equipment.¹ The Medical Supply Chain Act of 2020 will aid in addressing medical supply shortages and will also utilize American industry. American healthcare workers are putting their health and lives at risk, to care for others, without the personal protective equipment (PPE) they need for themselves², and without enough ventilators for the projected surge of patients.³

By compelling the Administration to identify domestic private sector capacity to produce nothing less than 500 million N95 respirators, 200,000 medical ventilators,

¹ <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/3/27/21194402/coronavirus-masks-n95-respirators-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/19/health/coronavirus-masks-shortage.html>

³ <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/03/14/815675678/as-the-pandemic-spreads-will-there-be-enough-ventilators>

20 million face shields, 500 million pairs of gloves, 20 million surgical gowns, and any other medical material deemed necessary for medical care personnel to do their jobs, the United States will address this pandemic with forceful action and American ingenuity. The bill further requires the administration to direct the distribution of these supplies, ending the unnecessary competition between states and health care institutions for these increasingly scarce resources.

One of the major issues with the procurement of supplies has been with our country's reliance on China in the medical supply chain. Prior to the pandemic, nearly half of the world's face masks were manufactured by Chinese suppliers.⁴ Inadequate stockpiles and lack of domestic manufacturing preparedness only exacerbated the shortages. The DPA *authorizes* the President to require U.S. manufacturers to pivot production towards in-demand resources during a crisis and federalize the allocation of those resources.

The legislative branch must fully use the federal government's authority to empower the American manufacturing base during this COVID-19 pandemic. The Medical Supply Chain Emergency Act of 2020 moves our country in the right direction and I urge you to co-sponsor and immediately pass S. 3568.

Sincerely,


Thomas Conway
International President

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/13/business/masks-china-coronavirus.html>