



April 1, 2020

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

Dear President Trump:

On behalf of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) and the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA), we thank you for instituting social distancing guidelines and extending them to April 30 and for enacting three major pieces of legislation to support the national response. As the medical specialty whose sole focus is the prevention, treatment and cure of infectious diseases, we write to offer ourselves and our national organization as an expert resource to your administration. This letter shares our top recommendations that are critical to control this unprecedented national health crisis and to prevent serious and long-lasting destruction to our health care system and our clinical workforce. We understand that important work has been initiated but write to reinforce the urgent need for national leadership and coordination in addressing the four key issues summarized below.

Compliance with Social Distancing Measures: The social distancing guidelines set forth by your administration are critical to slow the spread of COVID-19. Unfortunately, compliance with these guidelines varies significantly across the country. We recognize that some governors have taken additional steps to strengthen and enforce social distancing policies, while others are either not implementing or not fully implementing the administration's recommendations.¹ We urge you to continue broadcasting federally-sponsored public service messages from trusted sources through all media-- online, radio, TV, and in print-- to strongly encourage uniform compliance with social distancing and to ask governors to implement statewide policies that support the social distancing measures recommended by the administration. We need a collaborative national effort to support social distancing, as the virus does not know jurisdiction boundaries.

Rapid Scale Up of Testing Capacity: We continue to experience inadequate access to testing on the front lines. Increased testing capacity, including the development of an antibody test, is required to inform the time to resume normal activities and to limit the possibility of a second COVID-19 surge as is now occurring in several Asian countries. Despite actions that have been taken, our testing capacity falls well short of need. Widespread access to testing that allows for early detection and isolation of individuals, particularly for health care workers with possible exposure to coronavirus, is critical to stopping transmission. We appreciate that your administration granted academic clinical laboratories

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation. State Data and Policy Actions to Address Coronavirus. March 30, 2020. Online at: <https://www.kff.org/health-costs/issue-brief/state-data-and-policy-actions-to-address-coronavirus/>.

the appropriate regulatory flexibility to develop tests; these tests now comprise a significant portion of our testing capacity and often provide the most rapid results. We also appreciate the requirement that insurers cover COVID-19 tests. We urge you to now significantly ramp up the manufacturing and distribution of tests and testing supplies and ensure appropriate nationwide distribution.

Widespread Availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Critical Care Medical Supplies:

The new law that you have enacted will provide critical funding for the purchase of essential medical supplies, including PPE, testing supplies and ventilators. As the clinicians in leadership roles on the frontlines, we continue to experience firsthand the inadequacy of PPE supplies. Lack of PPE significantly increases the risk that health care providers will contract COVID-19, spread it to patients, and no longer be able to provide care. This cascade further interferes with our efforts to get ahead of this deadly virus.

A lack of ventilators and other lifesaving critical care equipment such as life support machines (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation) and acute kidney dialysis machines (continuous veno-venous hemofiltration) for our sickest patients will literally cost many lives. As we have seen in Italy, these resource constraints will determine how many patients will live or die.

We ask you to muster every tool at your disposal, including complete utilization of the Defense Production Act, to both rapidly scale up manufacturing and to ensure appropriate distribution of medical supplies to the hospitals that need them.

National Coordination of All Medical Supplies and Equipment: A national strategic plan and process is urgently needed to ensure that tests, medical supplies and equipment are distributed based on demand and need. As part of this coordination, transparency is critical so that health care systems and health care providers understand how these decisions are being made.

We cite above the most pressing issues. However, this pandemic highlights other critical health care and public health needs that must ultimately be addressed to ensure the success of our current response and to strengthen our approach to future outbreaks. The continuing health of our nation requires a robust infectious diseases workforce, new antibiotics to combat widespread antibiotic resistance, and to improve preparedness through investments in our public health system and in global health security.

Once again, we thank you for the efforts of your administration in this time of crisis. We urge an even stronger focus on the issues we have raised, and, as the health care professionals dedicated to the prevention, treatment and cure of infectious diseases, we again offer ourselves and our national organization as resources to you and your administration.

Sincerely,



Thomas M. File, Jr., MD, MSc
Fellow of the IDSA
President, IDSA



Judith Feinberg, MD
Fellow of the IDSA
Chair, HIVMA