

July 20, 2020

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

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

Our own organizations take seriously the responsibility to keep our communities and the nation safe, which is why we consider state contact tracing an investment in people, the economy, and the long-term future of our country. Our public health and medical experts need to be able to identify those who may have been exposed to COVID-19 and people must be allowed to safely quarantine or isolate if sick. Failure to execute these steps on the scale we need has resulted in the very surges we have been working so hard to prevent, erasing the sacrifices that people, communities, and businesses have made.

While much attention is being paid to the critical need to expand accurate and reliable testing, it is also only one part of a comprehensive approach to infection control. We must also address the importance of contact tracing: Whether through shoe leather, technology or both, this tried and true public health strategy is inextricably linked to our ability to keep our economy open with employee and consumer confidence.

According to a recent [KFF poll](#), most Americans think they will resume some usual activities within the next three months. Despite notable levels of comfort resuming activities, concerns around the pandemic remain high, and a majority of Americans want our national response to be informed by public health, medical experts and data. According to a recent poll by Ipsos, Americans are warming to the idea of contact tracing, especially as it relates to human-to-human rather than technological contact tracing: 76 percent of respondents reported they would give officials a list of everyone they had come into contact with.

As more states enter new phases of re-opening, we also continue to see COVID-19 cases spiking in new regions. We write to emphasize how central robust contact tracing is to keeping the virus contained and our communities open. As identified in an April 27, 2020 [letter](#) signed by leading, bipartisan public health experts, *"It is important to begin to prepare to open up the American economy again and get Americans back to work - in a way that minimizes the risk of resurgence in cases, hospitalizations and deaths."* In April, CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield told Congress, "We are going to need a substantial expansion of public health field workers."

This, along with ample testing, is what will be needed "to make sure that when we open up, we open up for good." The nation's third most populous state, Florida, only has about [10 percent](#) of the contact tracers required for their outbreak. A health district in Connecticut [has received](#) just \$40,000 in federal aid and was told that would have to last until March.

We are doing all we can to ensure our employees, members, customers, clients and communities have the information and protocols in place for us to operate in a safe and trusted manner. Many of us are in regular communication with our state, local and national public health and medical institutions in order for our operations to follow the best available guidance to reduce the transmission, incidence, and fatalities of COVID-19. Our commitment to the public health of our communities and the nation requires people to feel safe enough to resume economic, educational, religious, and social activities, and it will be difficult to get to that point if we are unable to ensure the safety of people across the country.

[Nearly every state](#) has begun to scale up contact tracing capacity, and we acknowledge the \$25 billion included in the CARES Act for these purposes, but [states](#) and budget officers across the country worry this number is [insufficient](#). Further, while some states are investing their [own](#) resources to supplement federal support, many state budgets have been [decimated](#) which will significantly impact their ability to augment contact tracing activities.

States and localities were estimated to have about 2,200 contact tracers prior to the COVID-19 response. Now, they have [planned to scale up to around 66,000 tracers](#) nationwide, which is a significant expansion of the public health workforce. However, even more tracers are needed – for a total of at least [100,000 or more](#) in order to meaningfully control transmission of the virus as states continue to lift social distancing restrictions. States will need robust funding both to meet this workforce goal and to sustain contact tracing efforts over the length of the pandemic.

We are over four months into this pandemic in the United States, and we have all used that time to respond as swiftly as possible, to work together, and demonstrate our ability to lead during times of crisis. We need to continue to be good stewards of community trust: if we want to get back to our full economic potential and create prosperity now and into the future, we ask that you act quickly to give states the substantial tools and resources they need to both track the virus and give the public the confidence to participate fully in all the activities which make living in America great.

Sincerely,

[American College of Physicians](#)

[American Medical Association](#)

[Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Health Security](#)

[Pacific Business Group on Health](#)

[Service Year Alliance](#)

[United States of Care](#)