

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 19, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Speaker Pelosi:

Events over the past weeks have made clear that it is time to implement a regular testing system available for everyone who works in and around the U.S. Capitol. As Congress has continued its work throughout the pandemic, this environment has created vulnerabilities for those coming into the Capitol buildings every day. With the limited tracking currently publicly available indicating more than 100 known positive cases amongst non-legislative employees or contractors alone, it is critical that everyone has access to and the assurance of strong testing protocols to prevent the unidentified spread that has occurred in several instances over the past few months. Failing to provide this testing puts everybody within the Capitol complex at risk.

This month, the President, First Lady, numerous senators, and administration staff tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. Given that these senators were present in Senate office buildings, attended hearings, and went to the Capitol to vote, there is a risk they could have spread the virus to others. While we are pleased that testing is now being offered to some Senate staff for the first time, these actions do not go far enough. They do not provide access to testing for all workers throughout the Capitol buildings, despite their risk of exposure. We ask you, in coordination with the Office of the Attending Physician, to expand access to free testing for all workers around the Capitol, including but not limited to restaurant, postal, and cleaning services, staff in personal offices and on committees, U.S. Capitol Police, Congressional Research Service staff, Architect of the Capitol employees, and Members of the Senate and House of Representatives.

In addition to providing testing to all those performing jobs in and around the Capitol, Congress should strengthen the use of other public health interventions. Since July, the House of Representatives has set a mandatory mask requirement; the Senate should join and extend this requirement to all common spaces of the Capitol complex, including Senate buildings. We also seek a notification system for staff potentially exposed when a positive case is identified. This is essential so that staff who were potentially exposed can follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to quarantine for 14 days after their last exposure to that person and self-monitor for symptoms. In some cases, staff have not been made aware of a potential exposure until media reporting, possibly putting them at risk in the intervening time.

Throughout this pandemic, the staff who keep operations going in the Capitol have faced numerous challenges and are showing up to work even as many congressional offices have their staff working remotely. They work long, often irregular hours and are committed to ensuring that the Capitol and its facilities and patrons are treated with the utmost respect and dignity. We should thank them for these indispensable services by doing our utmost to keep them safe and healthy each and every day by adopting a widespread testing plan and other public health practices.

Sincerely,

/s/ Christopher S. Murphy
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/ Brian Schatz
Brian Schatz
United States Senator

/s/ Tina Smith
Tina Smith
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Baldwin
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/ Patrick Leahy
Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

/s/ Mazie K. Hirono
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden
Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator