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United States Senate

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April 28, 2020

The Honorable Peter T. Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
500 C Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Gaynor:

I am writing to urge the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to develop policies for the nationwide distribution of COVID-19 tests and resources to states based on per capita population statistics.

Arizona health care providers are in dire need of additional testing. Arizona is among the bottom ten states in testing nationwide, when measured in tests per million residents. It has been a challenge to increase our state's overall testing capacity and to source the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE), chemical reagents, and test collection kit components (nasopharyngeal swabs and the viral transport medium) that make such testing possible. In response to the shortage of tests, our state's public health department has even advised clinicians in Arizona that they "should consider removing this diagnostic tool from their toolbox," and effectively not test for COVID-19. This means Arizona's confirmed COVID-19 case numbers are artificially low. If FEMA distributes federal resources based solely on confirmed COVID-19 numbers, Arizona will never receive an equitable share of funding, tests, PPE, and other assistance.

I also hear regularly from Arizona mayors and county leaders whose economies are suffering tremendous strain due to this public health emergency. Arizona leaders have been asked to permit businesses to open and allow Arizonans to get back to work, but cannot proceed safely unless wide-spread community testing is implemented. Among Arizona's major employers are rural hospitals, which are in imminent danger of closing their doors permanently because they lack the PPE and testing that would allow them to restart elective surgeries that provide a major source of revenue. It will only be possible to know when it is safe for our local businesses to once again welcome customers and visitors when we know the true levels of infection in our communities.

If the United States intends to reopen the economy in a safe and effective manner, it is imperative that FEMA quickly develop policies to provide each state with the test kits necessary

to accurately measure coronavirus cases. This expanded testing capability will allow for more detailed contact tracing to closely track, and ultimately prevent, hot spots throughout the nation. Without the ability to conduct broad, widespread testing, a lack of data will significantly hinder Arizona's ability to create accurate predictive models that can aid policymakers. State and community leaders will be reduced to relying on faulty data when making decisions about safely reopening parts of our economy. The inherent risk to communities is unacceptable.

I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact Sylvia Lee on my staff at Sylvia_Lee@sinema.senate.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kyrsten Sinema", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator