

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 29, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave
Washington, DC 20201

Peter T. Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Secretary Azar and Administrator Gaynor:

We write to convey our support for the continuation and expansion of your partnerships with pharmacies in New Jersey. For example, your partnership with Rite Aid pharmacies – in coordination with the State of New Jersey – has facilitated the installation of 13 Rite Aid managed testing sites. It is our understanding that federal support for some private testing sites is due to end in the coming days. Should federal support wane, we fear that testing capabilities across New Jersey will be reduced. We respectfully request that the Administration extend existing agreements with private partners in New Jersey for at least an additional three months and that additional testing kits be made available so new testing locations may participate.

On April 27th, Governor Murphy announced his vision for reopening the state, “The Road Back: Restoring Economic Health Through Public Health” and on May 12th outlined a coronavirus testing strategy. In particular, the Governor stressed the need to improve daily testing capacity to over 25,000 tests by the end of June. Pharmacies are a cornerstone of the State of New Jersey’s testing strategy. Following the testing announcement, the New Jersey Attorney General announced that the state’s Division of Consumer Affairs authorized licensed New Jersey pharmacists to widely administer COVID-19 tests to customers.

Rite Aid operates 71 coronavirus testing sites in New Jersey, which utilize self-swab nasal tests overseen by pharmacists. Collectively, these sites have the capacity to conduct up to 10,000 tests daily. CVS opened 11 testing locations earlier this month, and Governor Murphy announced that the pharmacy would expand to fifty-six sites. On May 22, Walmart opened seven testing sites. We believe that continued and additional federal support will allow these and other locations to expand their capacity. For instance, Rite Aid can maintain its current operations and open an additional fifty testing sites throughout the state with an additional 90,000 test kits.

As of writing, a total of 157,815 positive coronavirus cases have been identified in our state. We urge you to reconsider ending federal support for private testing sites in New Jersey and instead expand support to cover additional locations and facilities given New Jersey’s continued need. In order to safely reopen, we must sustain and grow New Jersey’s testing capacity with federal support and resources.

Thank you for your timely attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress



Andy Kim
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress