



## Support Frontline Health Workers with Basic Equipment

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Frontline health workers, who are entering hospitals every day, working overtime, and covering extra shifts in this historic pandemic, are put at unnecessary risk due to shortages of basic protective health equipment and testing kits. The lack of protective equipment — including N95 masks — and the lack of test kits to diagnose and treat patients make it nearly impossible to care for patients effectively and safely. Without basic protection, dozens of clinicians in the U.S. have **already contracted COVID-19**, putting their lives and the lives of their families at risk. We must stand with frontline health workers and their patients, demanding health and social systems that serve all people, fully funded and supported with staff, stuff, space and systems. **The US must re-instate its epidemic response teams in the CDC, the National Security Council and USAID and increase funding of the WHO. We must provide funding to public health departments in order for them to be ready to respond to health crises and support frontline health workers with such things as protective equipment, testing kits, and ventilators, just to name a few.**

These shortages were avoidable and they never should have happened. The lack of basic equipment is not due to the pandemic itself. Rather, the effects of the virus are intensified by the active de-funding of our health system by the Trump administration.

Since his inauguration, Trump has left **almost half our scientific leadership positions unfilled**. In 2018, the CDC was forced to close or downsize its efforts to fight global epidemic outbreaks in 39 of 40 countries, including China. That same year, the **Trump administration dismantled the National Security Council's global health security unit** and recalled \$252 million of emergency funds for rapid response to outbreaks. In 2019, the Trump administration closed the US Agency for International Development's program working with researchers across the world to respond to viruses. And Trump's 2021 budget released last month includes \$3 billion in further cuts to core federal agencies including global health response programs. As **Robert Reich, former Secretary of Labor, pointed out**, in many senses we do not have a public health system. Instead, we work in a for-profit healthcare system that is disjointed and ill-prepared for this and future crises.