

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 29, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As Congress considers additional legislation to address the COVID-19 crisis, we strongly urge you to recognize and prioritize the role of not-for-profit blood centers. A safe and available blood supply is a core component of our nation's health care system and financial resources must be dedicated to ensuring blood centers can continue to provide lifesaving blood components to patients in communities across the country.

Blood centers are actively engaged in supporting the needs of patients during COVID-19. A wide range of patients will continue to need blood transfusions throughout the pandemic, including new mothers who may have experienced complications during delivery, individuals with cancer who require blood as part of their regular treatment regimen, patients who require surgery and need blood to ensure a healthy recovery, and many others.

In addition to changing standard operating procedures to facilitate safe collection from volunteer donors, and continuing to meet the constant need for specialized blood products and services, blood centers have also mobilized to collect convalescent plasma, a component of the blood of patients that have already recovered from COVID-19. Convalescent plasma contains antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), allowing patients fighting COVID-19 to potentially benefit from the immunity built up by others that have already recovered.

The ongoing work of blood centers during COVID-19 reflects the blood community's commitment to meet any challenge. However, the unprecedented nature of this pandemic has resulted in significant financial stressors on blood centers of all size. With increased expenditures relating to necessary public health measures such as social distancing, and significantly decreased revenues resulting from reductions in blood use due to elective surgery cancellations, many blood centers are now financially threatened at the very time they are stepping up to help the nation in the fight against COVID-19.

The U.S. blood supply faces serious operational challenges as thousands of blood drives have been canceled as organizations and businesses temporarily close. As a result, blood centers have quickly transitioned their operations to ensure a sufficient blood supply during the pandemic.

While the need for blood remains, there have been reports of hospitals postponing elective surgeries and procedures, which results in decreased utilization. The result is a devastating drop in revenue for centers that is unsustainable financially. Additionally, when blood usage increases again, blood centers will face additional costs to recruit new donors to compensate for delayed demand.

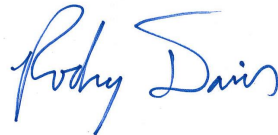
Protecting the health and safety of donors, patients, and blood center staff remains the top priority for the blood community. To ensure the safety of both staff and the healthy blood donors, blood centers across the country are undertaking extraordinary public health measures including social distancing, increased infection control procedures, acquisition of personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff, and more. These measures, in addition to the impact of cancelled drives, have added substantial costs to blood center operations, both directly and through decreased efficiency.

Blood centers have always made sure Americans have a safe and robust blood supply. Yet, previous relief bills have failed to fully address the needs of this essential component of our health care system. We urge you to include blood center-specific relief sufficient to address the impact of the entirety of this pandemic in the next legislative package. Blood centers need assistance now in order to survive.

Sincerely,



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



Rodney Davis
Member of Congress



Eliot Engel
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
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Josh Harder
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Susan A. Davis
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William R. Timmons, IV
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Randy K. Weber
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Adam B. Schiff
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Tulsi Gabbard
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Steve Cohen
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Paul Cook
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Ruben Gallego
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Dave Loebsack
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Alcee L. Hastings
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Devin Nunes
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