

Policy Committee of the National Muslim COVID-19 Task Force



MUSLIM
PUBLIC
AFFAIRS
COUNCIL



May 14, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-230
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-224
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Letter to Support HEROES Act - Testing, Tracing and Treatment Provision

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

To effectively control the rate of infection, it is imperative that we accelerate our efforts to identify the spread of COVID-19 across all 57 jurisdictions of the United States. The **HEROES Act** effectively addresses the importance of this measure by supporting testing, tracing and treatment, by providing another \$75 billion for coronavirus testing, contact tracing and isolation measures, ensuring every American can access free coronavirus treatment, and supporting hospitals and providers

Over 1,300,000 people are confirmed to be infected in the US and this number is growing exponentially every day. This high number does not even reflect the vast number of cases which have not been tested or reported to the CDC. There are two possible pathways to control this

pandemic: wait until herd immunity develops or implement stringent public health measures, or both. The concept of herd immunity involves significant loss of life and doesn't stop the spread of the virus. Stringent public health measures, including enacting the measures defined in the **HEROES Act**, require significant efforts on part of the administration to act NOW. These measures as described in the **HEROES Act** include testing all people (whether they are symptomatic or asymptomatic), enforcing similar social distancing guidelines throughout the entire country, and implementing quarantine measures based on test results. Despite invoking the Defense Production Act for ventilators and PPE, there remains a significant deficit in actual implementation of this Act, and the scope of this Act needs to be expanded to include increasing testing supplies across the nation as an integral public health strategy.

There is currently still a colossal shortage of Coronavirus test kits in the United States. American pharmaceutical companies such as Abbott Labs and ThermoFisher have made tremendous progress on this front with their efforts to create test kits that are capable of providing accurate test results in just hours. These tests have already been approved by the FDA's Emergency Use Authorization, and must be made available to the public immediately. The shortage of tests and overall lack of federal funding towards healthcare has hampered our efforts in containing the spread of infection and has consequently prevented us from being effective in follow-up procedures, including tracking, decontamination and timely quarantine implementation.

As a nation, we cannot afford to continue neglecting the significance of COVID-19 and must increase healthcare funding such that we do not withhold the right to testing from anybody. However, testing has to be enacted with ancillary measures that have been proven to be effective globally in controlling the pandemic. This includes measures to track infected individuals and to decontaminate areas visited by infected persons. These are not extraordinary measures but in fact are simply required tactics utilized by countries with better outcomes. We should not lag behind in these efforts since the US is the epicenter of technology and our resources surpass those of any other nation. Therefore, we need to implement these measures effectively and immediately. In addition, diagnostics without appropriate treatment measures is insufficient, and therefore as mentioned in the **HEROES Act**, the right to treatment should be afforded to all Americans and every step should be taken to support providers and hospitals in that respect.

The US has fallen behind in fighting the epidemic nationally as we have failed to utilize these strategies of testing, isolating, and tracking with due urgency. Drawing from South Korea's example could prove beneficial in our effort to contain the virus. In fact, South Korea had its first case around the same time as the US but was able to swiftly tackle the rate of infection through mass levels of testing and transparency between the government and its people. The US is also failing to protect our most vulnerable citizens, and we are witnessing drastic racial disparities in

prevalence and outcomes. Hospitals and providers are struggling to treat patients with COVID-19 leading to poor outcomes with high mortality and morbidity rates.

Overall in this state of emergency, we need to rise to the occasion and institute the policies that are required in this crisis. For this reason we need to support and implement the elements of the **HEROES Act** especially as it relates to testing, tracing and treatment.

Sincerely,

Policy Committee Of National Muslim Covid-19 Taskforce:

American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP)

Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)

Islamic Medical Association of North American (IMANA)

Other Signatories:

Women Neurologists Group

American Muslim Community Foundation

Black Women's Health Imperative

Association of Muslim Chaplains

Progressive Doctors

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Family Medicine Clinic for Health Equity

Asian American Center of Frederick (MD)

Green Muslims

Community Catalyst

Health Care for All PA

Delaware Academy of Medicine and the Delaware Public Health Association

HealthxDesign

Zaman International

Children's Defense Fund - Texas

SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center

Apna ghar llc

National Health Care for the Homeless Council

Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative

Imamia Medics International (IMI)