

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 19, 2022

J. Brett Blanton  
Architect of the Capitol  
Room SB-15 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Sonceria Ann Berry  
Secretary of the Senate  
Room S-312 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Blanton and Ms. Berry:

We write to share our frustration with the decision to provide members of the U.S. House of Representatives with KN95 masks made in China. We strongly urge you to take clear steps that ensure future mask purchases and orders for other essential products and personal protective equipment (PPE) prioritize products made in the U.S. using U.S. materials made by American workers. American taxpayer dollars should support high-quality products made in America by American workers. Period.

American companies have stepped up throughout the past two years, retooling manufacturing lines to help compensate for supply chain weaknesses and to meet the need for essential products, including N95 respirator masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE). These companies saved American lives. Thanks to the entrepreneurship and patriotism of these U.S. companies and their workers, we now have dozens more manufacturers of N95 respirators and other high-quality masks based here in the United States than we did before the pandemic, when less than 10 percent of N95 respirators were manufactured domestically. The nationwide and global reports of PPE shortages at the beginning of the pandemic underscore the necessity of maintaining domestic PPE production capability.

Despite the urgent need for high-quality, American made products, too many U.S.-based PPE manufacturers are struggling to exist as health systems and other major purchasers of PPE choose to purchase cheaper, lower-quality masks and other supplies from China. In fact, the American Mask Manufacturer's Association estimates that nearly 6,000 of the approximately 8,000 jobs that were created by U.S. mask manufacturers have since disappeared, due to the lack of support that these companies have received due to the continued purchase of foreign made - particularly Chinese-made-products. Regrettably, a key reason this part of the industry was offshored pre-COVID was because price was the predominant factor in purchasing. It is unacceptable that the federal legislative branch – using taxpayer dollars – has chosen to purchase potentially inferior masks from China when we have domestic manufacturers eager to deliver high-quality masks. We must not compromise the health of Americans by making purchases based mainly on lowest cost.

Unlike their KN95 competitors, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)-certified American N95 respirator masks must meet rigorous standards and offer excellent protection against COVID-19 transmission. According to a recent article in the Wall Street Journal, it “will take 25 hours for an infectious dose of COVID-19 to transmit between people wearing non-fit-tested N95 respirators. If they’re using tightly sealed N95s – where only 1% of particles enter the facepiece – they will have 2,500 hours of protection.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued a warning that approximately 60 percent of KN95 respirators in the U.S. are counterfeit, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has raised quality concerns with healthcare providers about Chinese-made PPE. Recognizing the risk that lower-quality, potentially counterfeit products pose to the health and national security of Americans, Congress acted in December 2021 to prohibit U.S. Department of Defense from purchasing any PPE – including masks – from China (Public Law No. 117-81, sec. 802) or other non-allied nations. Congress also provided \$10 billion in the American Rescue Plan for the federal government to purchase needed medical supplies, including N95 and other FDA-authorized masks. The legislative branch of the United States government should also hold itself to this higher standard that prioritizes American lives and American manufacturers over competition from China.

Purchasing PPE made by American workers here in the U.S. supports domestic manufacturing and helps ensure a more reliable, consistent supply chain for these essential products. It also supports higher quality products, which offer superior protection against the transmission of COVID-19. We strongly urge you to prioritize the use of federal taxpayer dollars for the procurement and distribution of domestically made PPE that meets high quality standards from established, proven, and vetted suppliers in future purchases.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



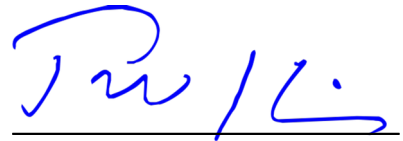
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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



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Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



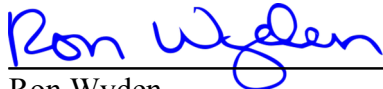
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Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



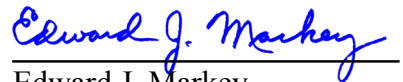
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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



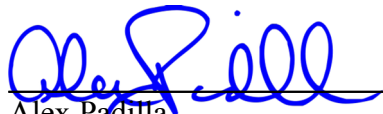
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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



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Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



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Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



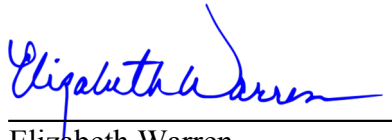
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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



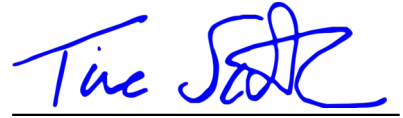
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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



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Tina Smith  
United States Senator



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Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator

CC: The Honorable Karen Gibson, Senate Sergeant at Arms  
The Honorable William J. Walker, House Sergeant at Arms  
Rear Admiral Brian P. Monahan, M.D., U.S. Capitol Attending Physician