

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
COMMERCE
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

March 16, 2021

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

First, I write to congratulate you on signing the American Rescue Plan into law. This historic legislative package, which will provide relief and support to millions of Americans who have suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic, also includes important funding to secure domestic supply chains for the COVID-19 response and for future preparedness efforts.

Following the release of your American Rescue Plan, which called for funding to boost needed critical medical supplies, I introduced legislation to provide \$10 billion to secure critical materials and supplies to combat the pandemic. My legislation was included in the now-enacted American Rescue Plan. This funding is critical to shore up domestic production of personal protective equipment (PPE) under the authorities of the Defense Production Act (DPA) of 1950. As you consider which priorities will receive funding, I urge you to strongly consider dedicating no less than ten percent of funding to securing domestic sources of raw materials used to manufacture PPE, such as N95 and N99 masks. Specifically, I urge you to ensure adequate funding to secure domestic sources for the raw material used for mask production – non-woven medical grade “meltblown” material.

As my colleagues and I shared in a January letter to your office, our federal response under the previous Administration was hampered by the fact that the U.S. did not have sufficient domestic sources of critical PPE. This was exacerbated by a shortage of raw materials such as nonwoven meltblown material used to manufacture N95 and N99 masks. Foreign manufacturers in China and other countries have a significant market share of global meltblown material, despite limited capacity to produce medical grade meltblown. Such manufacturers have repeatedly failed Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) testing standards. Approximately 90 percent of the 1,300+ NIOSH approvals of N95 masks have been awarded to Chinese manufacturers¹. Making a significant investment in domestic manufacturers of this material will help secure a supply chain that is critical for our continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as future pandemic preparedness.

¹ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-15/code-words-chaos-sky-high-prices-inside-china-s-mask-market?sref=6lbnq7ur>

Dependable and resilient domestic manufacturing capacity to support and respond to pandemics is clearly a national security imperative. The funding provided in the American Rescue Plan will be crucial as you look to secure domestic supply chains for critical materials and technology. I continue to stand ready to partner with you to help overcome obstacles in securing domestic supply chains.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator