

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: In letter to President Trump, Senate Democrats call administration's testing blueprint insufficient, insist federal government must release and implement national plan

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) joined Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) and 39 Senate Democrats in sending a letter to President Trump, calling on his administration to develop a comprehensive national strategic plan of action by May 24th to ensure states have sufficient tests to begin safely re-opening.

The first known case of COVID-19 in the United States was diagnosed in Washington state on January 20, 2020. After 12 weeks, more than 1.1 million cases of COVID-19 and more than 67,000 deaths, the United States still lacks a national testing strategy to reliably and consistently test patients across the country. Instead, states have been forced to respond with limited federal support, leaving a patchwork of testing efforts across the country, limited data on the spread of the disease, and scarce supplies for testing and protection of health care workers. Last week, the Trump administration released its national coronavirus testing “blueprint”, but the document accomplishes nothing new and instead continues to place the burden on already hard-hit states.

In the letter, the Senators laid out their expectations for what details the administration needs to include in the national plan it is required to submit to Congress by May 24th under the *Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act*. The Senators write that while states and tribes are critical in executing nationwide testing, it is the administration's responsibility to release and implement a detailed national plan as quickly as possible, as well as address other problems that demand a federal solution, such as managing the supply chain and analyzing national data. In addition, they urged President Trump to use the full authority of the Executive Branch, including the Defense Production Act and the \$25 billion allocated in the *Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act*, which was the most recent COVID-19 response legislation, to ensure sufficient production of testing kits and materials—such as testing swabs, reagents and personal protective equipment (PPE)—to meet demand. The Senators also emphasized increasing lab testing capacity and building up a massive contact tracing workforce in order to identify future COVID-19 cases and contain the spread, in coordination with states.

In addition to Senators Baldwin, Schumer and Murray, the letter was signed by Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Tom Carper (D-DE), Ed Markey (D-MA), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Bob Casey (D-PA), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Tom Udall (D-NM), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Gary Peters (D-MI), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Tina Smith (D-MN), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Mark Warner (D-VA), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Jack Reed (D-RI), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Chris Coons (D-DE), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Doug Jones (D-AL), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), and Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ).

A copy of the letter is available [here](#) and below. An online version of this release is available [here](#).