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The President
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Dear Mr. President:

To help our patients live longer and beat cancer, the Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI) once again writes for your assistance during this unprecedented health care crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. We seek your leadership in deploying personal protective equipment (PPE) to all hospitals and establishing a consistent national COVID-19 testing strategy.

AACI represents leading academic cancer centers in the United States and Canada that are at the forefront of cancer research, patient care, prevention, education, and community outreach. AACI cancer centers are responsible for treating a particularly vulnerable patient population, some of whom have already contracted COVID-19 and died from respiratory failure.

In March, we wrote to implore you to invoke the Defense Production Act to get critically needed supplies to those working on the frontlines. Nearly five weeks later, many hospitals and cancer centers are still coping with shortages and lack sufficient COVID-19 testing supplies. It is imperative that the federal government play the lead role in managing the COVID-19 supply chain, including maintaining a database for easy acquisition of supplies and equipment.

COVID-19 is especially dangerous for people with cancer. Their immune systems are weak, making it difficult to fight off infection, and many cancer patients have other health complications that can lead to deadly consequences if they get coronavirus. Also, many important, even lifesaving cancer therapies can cause severe, sometimes fatal inflammation of the lungs or other tissues. Many of these same tissues are affected by COVID-19 infection. Consequently, administering such drugs to cancer patients with undetected or partially resolved COVID-19 infection could have devastating consequences. In order to continue delivering the world-class, cutting-edge cancer care for which AACI centers are known around the world, we simply must ensure that patients and those who care for them are equipped with appropriate PPE and have access to COVID-19 tests.

Our patients generally require frequent interactions with health care providers who are themselves in danger of COVID-19 infection. Due to the outbreak's strain on resources, and fear of contracting COVID-19 at a hospital, some patients have postponed cancer-related tests and surgeries. As recent research shows, such delays could significantly diminish health and result in more and earlier deaths from cancer.

Even as the spread of COVID-19 slows, cancer centers must be able to test all patients—those with coronavirus symptoms and those without—to readily identify those who are infected, help prevent a resurgence of the illness, and give patients with cancer their best chance at successful treatment outcomes. We are calling on you to ensure that a national testing system is immediately established across the country.

Thank you very much for considering our request.

Most respectfully,

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