

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0926

March 4, 2020

Governor Ron DeSantis
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor DeSantis:

Today, the House of Representatives passed a supplemental funding package in response to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), which we expect will be signed into law before the end of the week. This package will contain \$8.3 billion in funding, \$2.2 billion of which is allocated to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to support federal, state, and local health agencies. We expect a significant portion to go directly to Florida to assist with our state's response.

Like you, I am greatly concerned with COVID-19's potential impact on our state. Although we are taking action on a federal level, I recognize the critical role that state and local jurisdictions play in preventing the spread of this virus, especially with respect to community outreach and education.

Given my background as an Associate Dean at Florida International University's College of Medicine, I helped establish and grow the Green Family Foundation NeighborhoodHELP program to improve access to care. With this program, we established mobile health clinics to bring healthcare services to underprivileged communities across South Florida. With NeighborhoodHELP, I witnessed the importance of public outreach to our communities firsthand. Without a vaccine or therapeutic treatment, the best response to COVID-19 is informed communities, who are aware of recommended public health practices and know what symptoms to look out for when deciding to seek further care.

Public health experts, including Aileen Marty, M.D., F.A.C.P., a professor of Infectious Diseases in the Department of Medicine at FIU, have recommended the establishment of clinical hotlines that potential carriers of COVID-19 in our community can call for information on further care. These hotlines should be staffed with clinicians trained to identify signs of COVID-19 and make recommendations for people to seek further care based on potential symptoms, travel history, and community contact. This form of outreach would not only make information more accessible for Floridians across the state but would also alleviate heavy traffic within our healthcare facilities. It is also crucial that these lines be staffed by trained health professionals of differing backgrounds, that reflect the rich diversity of our state and are prepared to provide linguistically and culturally appropriate advice.

Given the importance of effective public outreach, I urge you to give strong consideration to the establishment of a state hotline. Additionally, as you receive updated information, we ask that you make it readily available to our communities, so they are empowered to best respond. Let us work together to combat the spread of this disease.

Sincerely,



Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress