

## United States Senate

March 13, 2020

Director Michael Carvajal  
Federal Bureau of Prisons  
320 First St., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20534

Dear Director Carvajal:

As people across this country and around the world work diligently to protect themselves and their communities from the spread of coronavirus, the demand for goods that can help prevent transmission of the virus will far outstrip supply. Americans are already walking into stores only to find empty shelves where hand sanitizer, face masks, disinfectant wipes, and other vital products are usually displayed for sale. I therefore urge the Bureau of Prisons through UNICOR to prioritize and increase the production of personal protective equipment to help alleviate this dangerous shortfall and keep Americans healthy.

Prioritizing the production of personal protective equipment would exemplify UNICOR's mission to protect society and prepare inmates for successful reentry to society by providing them the opportunity to work hard to help their fellow Americans in a time of need. And it would be consistent with a long history of inmates assisting in a national emergencies. As you know, prisoners have helped mitigate hardships from flooding, snowstorms, hurricanes, tornadoes, and mudslides.

Moreover, UNICOR is uniquely suited to help meet the demand for personal protective equipment. As we have seen in New York, where Governor Andrew Cuomo has tasked Corcraft, New York State's UNICOR equivalent, with the production of hand sanitizer to meet the needs of New Yorkers, inmates have the ability to produce needed products of high quality. But New York is only one state, and it has only assigned labor from one facility to produce one product. The Bureau of Prisons, by contrast, operates facilities nationwide that house approximately 175,000 federal inmates. With its substantially greater labor force and reach, the Bureau through UNICOR has the potential to produce a greater quantity and variety of needed products.

If the shortage of personal protective equipment worsens or continues unabated, incidents of price gouging will proliferate too. For example, the price of hand sanitizer has already increased by 50 percent on online retailers such as Amazon, and is likely to continue to rise. Federal and state officials will be working to combat anti-price gouging measures, but punitive action can only do so much. We must increase the supply of these products.

That is why I urge you to take immediate and bold steps to increase the production of personal protective equipment that enables Americans keep themselves healthy.

Sincerely,



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Ted Cruz  
United States Senator