

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 16, 2020

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

Dear President Trump,

We urge you to immediately issue an executive order directing agencies to use telework to the maximum extent practicable in light of the COVID-19 emergency. The Office of Management and Budget issued guidance for agencies to increase telework flexibility in the National Capital Region, but your order should be a clear direction – rather than general guidance – and it should be worldwide in scope. State and local governments have been far more proactive than the federal Executive Branch in making arrangements for their employees to telework where possible. We have maximized teleworking in our Senate Offices. You should order Executive agencies to do the same. We must lead by example.

Your order should direct federal agencies to allow all telework-eligible federal workers to telework full-time, unless there is a clear and compelling reason not to do so for the effective operation of government. You should also order federal agencies to evaluate whether non-telework-eligible employees can be telework-eligible, and to do so for all employees where there is not a clear and compelling reason that telework is not compatible with the performance of their job functions.

You should order agencies to immediately rescind all cuts to telework made since 2016. In 2017, the most recent year for which data are available, 21% of federal employees participated in telework – a slight decline after years of steady increases from 14% in 2012. In 2017, 43% of employees were telework-eligible, so allowing all of them to telework during this emergency would make an immediate difference.

These telework directives should apply to federal workers throughout the United States and to other countries where there are cases of COVID-19. In the National Capital Region, 40% of Metro commuters during morning rush hour are federal employees, and these crowded trains and buses pose a major risk for COVID-19 transmission. But COVID-19 is a global pandemic, and only 15% of federal employees work in the National Capital Region. The federal government should not wait until an area already has widespread community transmission of COVID-19 to act.

Voluntary guidance is not enough – agencies need clear orders. In the absence of a clear order, agencies and managers have been hesitant to take major actions to shift towards telework and we hear from increasingly anxious federal workers in our states on a daily basis.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

/s/ Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine
United States Senator

/s/ Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/ Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/ Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/ Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

/s/ Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/ Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

/s/ Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

/s/ Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

/s/ Tom Udall
United States Senator

/s/ Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

/s/ Jack Reed
United States Senator

/s/ Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

/s/ Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

/s/ Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

/s/ Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/ Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/ Robert Menendez
United States Senator