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*****MEDIA RELEASE*****

88 State and National Groups Call on President Trump to Invoke Full Powers under Defense Production Act to Spur Immediate Mass Production of Ventilators and Medical Supplies to Save American Lives

Today, 88 state and national organizations representing Americans with chronic health conditions and disabilities, and other groups, wrote to President Donald J. Trump urging him to invoke his full powers under the Defense Production (DPA) not only to rationally allocate scarce equipment but also to spur a dramatic increase in the immediate production of ventilators, personal protection equipment and other essential medical supplies, as the Covid-19 virus spreads throughout the country exhausting supplies of these essential items.

Their request follows that from the American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association and the American Nurses Association that the President immediately use the manufacturing authority in the DPA to increase the domestic production of supplies and equipment that hospitals, physicians, nurses and all front line providers so desperately need, so as to save hundreds of thousands of American lives.

The groups state in their letter that “Many of our clients, members and staff have conditions which put them at particular risk of severe complications and death in the event they contract the Covid-19 virus,” and state: “We have a well-grounded fear that an approach to wait and see if existing efforts are sufficient will put vulnerable individuals’ health and lives at risk. Invoking this DPA manufacturing authority at that point will be tragically too late.”

There are already suggestions that families and even people who have filled out advance directives will have their wishes overridden because within a particular hospital a ventilator might be required for someone higher on a priority list. The groups do not want someone’s life to end as families and doctors scream at each other in the hospital corridor outside her isolation room.

The groups state: “Given the shortage, individuals who have disabilities and chronic health conditions are very likely to be the ones denied this life-sustaining equipment, no matter what laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act say, because someone trying to manage in the overwhelming crisis will say they are less likely than younger and healthier people to survive their ordeal.”

The groups issued their letter to the President despite his limited order under the DPA issued March 27th to one company, General Motors. That action is not enough – it could be nothing more than a one-time command to get a one-time advantage in negotiations with GM. The plan for the GM factory is not expected to bring ventilators on-line for many months to come, it does not address the immediate need for ventilators, and it does not address the need for other kinds of equipment and supplies necessary to keep Americans, including particularly health care workers, alive, such as personal protection equipment. Given the life and death stakes, Americans have a right to much more.

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