

March 6, 2020

CDC Incident Manager for Coronavirus
Coevent193@cdc.gov

Arjun Srinivasan, MD, FSHEA
Captain, USPHS
Associate Director for Healthcare Associated Infection Prevention Programs
Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Rd., MS H16-3
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Incident Manager and Dr. Srinivasan:

Thank you for keeping us apprised of your efforts to respond to the current COVID-19 outbreak. Considering the dynamic and evolving nature of this situation, maintaining this open dialogue is vital. We appreciate and look forward to our continued collaboration.

During our call yesterday, March 5, 2020, you reiterated that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention remain committed to introducing flexibility into the current guidance for healthcare facilities that will mean weakened protections on the ground. After our discussion, we remain concerned about the following changes:

- CDC's indication that they will allow use of facemasks instead of respirators
- Change made to CDC's guidance that decisions about precautionary leave for healthcare workers who have been exposed to a COVID-19 patient may not reflect scientific evidence about infectivity of asymptomatic infections

We, the undersigned unions, agree that the proposed changes would not only decrease the level of protection for healthcare workers but would also contribute to the spread of this virus.

Emerging diseases like COVID-19 are a pressing occupational hazard for many workers on the frontlines, especially healthcare workers. We are strongly opposed to any measures that fail to provide optimal protection and infection control standards. Now is the time to use every possible tool available to guarantee the highest level of protection, guided by the precautionary principle, to prevent further spread of infection, protect healthcare workers, and preserve our capacity to respond to a widespread outbreak.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Castillo, Executive Director, RN
National Nurses United

International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and
Agricultural Implement Workers of America, UAW

Randi Weingarten, President
American Federation of Teachers

The International of Sheet Metal Air Rail and
Transportation Workers (SMART)

American Postal Workers Union

Transport Workers Union of America

Debbie White, President, RN
Health Professionals & Allied Employees

International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Utility Workers Union of America

International Federation of Professional and Technical
Engineers, IFPTE

Service Employees International Union

New York State Nurses Association

International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craft
Workers