

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 17, 2020

Speaker Nancy Pelosi  
United States House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol, H-232  
Washington, D.C., 20515

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy  
United States House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol, H-204  
Washington, D.C., 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy,

We write to raise public health concerns stemming from Congress' resumption of official business in the nation's capital amid a deadly pandemic.

We represent the residents of the National Capital Region, including those who live or work on Capitol Hill. To date, over 2,600 people living in the region have died from COVID-19, and tens of thousands have tested positive.<sup>1</sup> That figure includes Capitol Police officers,<sup>2</sup> construction workers involved in projects at congressional office buildings,<sup>34</sup> congressional staff,<sup>56</sup> and Members of Congress.<sup>7</sup> It is abundantly clear that no one is immune to the deadly effects of this virus.

Given the toll this pandemic has taken on residents of Washington, D.C. and the surrounding area, we are dismayed by the reluctance of many of our colleagues serving in the House to take necessary precautions to protect those around them.<sup>8</sup> We have personally observed Members of the House refusing to engage in social distancing or wear face coverings, and mocking those who do. We have read accounts and interviews with colleagues in which they defend their refusal to wear masks.<sup>9</sup> Such conduct misses an opportunity which all of us as leaders should embrace – to model good, responsible behavior. Worse, it directly endangers our constituents who work in their proximity, some of whom have contacted us to say they are not comfortable working on Capitol Hill around Members of Congress who do not prioritize their safety.

Face coverings are recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and the Attending Physician of the U.S. Congress to prevent transmission of the coronavirus.<sup>1011</sup> Their effectiveness in preventing the spread of this disease has been documented repeatedly in medical studies, particularly in indoor areas where adequate social distancing is made difficult by tight spaces, which is true of the U.S. Capitol.<sup>121314</sup> Face coverings are also required by orders issued by the leaders of the jurisdictions we represent for anyone who visits a store, patronizes an indoor business, or rides public transportation.<sup>15161718</sup> For average citizens, these orders are not optional, they are a legally-mandated public health requirement. Yet in Congress, where the nation's leaders gather, these simple lifesaving precautions are ignored too often.

We therefore ask that you issue strong, explicit directives to Members of the House regarding proper face coverings, social distancing, and other public health precautions recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and local public health departments with all possible haste. Such measures will help protect Members of Congress and those whose work requires close contact with them. Senate leaders recently encouraged their Members to adopt face coverings,<sup>19</sup> and we believe the House should as well.

This virus will not be impressed by cavalier attitudes or political posturing, nor will its spread discriminate based on partisan allegiance. Social distancing and wearing masks saves lives. Congress should put sound medical and scientific advice first, and adopt them uniformly.

We thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,



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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress

/s/

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Steny H. Hoyer  
Member of Congress

/s/

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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

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Anthony G. Brown  
Member of Congress

/s/

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

/s/

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Jennifer Wexton  
Member of Congress

/s/

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress

/s/

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David Trone  
Member of Congress

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