

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 21, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

Thank you very much for your leadership to address the COVID-19 pandemic. We applaud your announcement to take new steps that keep Americans safe from Omicron, including using the Defense Production Act to further accelerate production of additional testing kits as quickly as possible. We respectfully encourage your Administration to steer the necessary testing kits to New York City as it will require additional testing kits in the months ahead to protect people and communities from severe illness.

From getting shots into arms, to requiring masking, your Administration has taken these steps and other actions to provide protection from the virus. Nevertheless, the Omicron variant presents us with new challenges. Last Friday, New York State reported 21,027 new positive cases of COVID-19, a new single-day record. Of those new cases, New York City represented almost half. With the rapid spread of the virus comes increased demand for COVID-19 testing.

Friday marked the highest reported testing day in New York City since the beginning of the pandemic. In New York City, lines for testing have wrapped around city blocks. Our constituents report wait times well over an hour, upwards of six hours in some places. Others report traveling to upwards of three different testing sites as frustration continues to mount as test sites across the five boroughs are running out of tests. At-home COVID-19 testing kits are also becoming scarce at pharmacies, leaving New Yorkers with few testing options before holiday travel commences.

Throughout this pandemic, New York City has served as the bellwether for the state of the pandemic, and an indicator of the steps we need to take to address a rise in cases nationally. As we head into a busy holiday season in which many New Yorkers are grieving someone they lost to the pandemic, the proactive, preventative steps we take now to make testing truly accessible can save lives and prevent a deadly repeat of 2020. We further emphasize the need to ensure at-home tests are made available free of charge to remove barriers that may otherwise prevent people from receiving the care they need and keeping our communities healthy and safe. We sincerely appreciate that the Administration invoked the Defense Production Act in February and has procured to date nearly \$2 billion in rapid point-of-care and over-the-counter at-home COVID-19 tests from multiple COVID-19 test manufacturers. Building on your successes in the fight against the virus, we must ensure cities like New York City have access to a sufficient number of tests to meet the demands of the Omicron surge.

Ensuring our communities have adequate COVID-19 testing stockpiles will ensure that those seeking to travel or spend time indoors can do so safely after securing a negative test result.

Thank you again for your leadership to address the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to continuing to work with you to defeat this virus and heal from the trauma it has inflicted.


Sincerely,



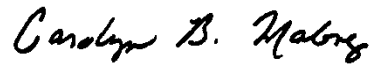
Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



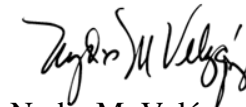
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