



May 24, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

We write to express our strong support for including robust domestic procurement policies for personal protective equipment (PPE) in the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act (USICA) currently being considered by the Senate. Specifically, we urge you to ensure broad government coverage for domestic PPE procurement by extending rules for PPE procurement substantially similar to the Berry Amendment to the federal government's largest buyers of these products, including the Departments of Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, Veterans Affairs, and Defense. We thank you for including such a provision in Section 4153 of the USICA, which is substantially similar to the bipartisan Make PPE in America Act (S.1306) introduced earlier this year by Senators Peters and Portman. As you consider legislation to respond to the legacy of manufacturing and technology offshoring to China, provisions like Section 4153 are vital to reduce U.S. dependency on China for essential medical supplies.

Last spring when our national PPE crisis was on the nightly news showing health care workers wearing garbage bags as gowns and reusing N95 masks, our severe overreliance on China for PPE revealed the undeniable fact that the lack of U.S. production of PPE is a threat to our national security and the public health of the American people. Our lack of domestic PPE manufacturing is the result of a generation's worth of offshoring that has not only undermined our public health

response, but centralized critical manufacturing in the hands of a strategic adversary. Failure to rectify this threatening dependency would be to snub our nose at Murphy's Law—the idea that if something can go wrong, it will go wrong. It will show to the American people that our leaders have failed to learn the lessons of COVID-19.

Despite PPE shortages and supply chain disruptions, American workers stepped in to fill an enormous void. As a result of its sweat and ingenuity, U.S. manufacturing produced over a billion critical PPE items such as face masks, isolation gowns, and testing kit swabs for health care and frontline workers, as well as the American people. In doing so, these manufacturers planted the seeds of a budding re-shoring and near-shoring effort. For the first time in years, America makes PPE again.

For this trend to take hold, however, the emergent U.S. PPE industry needs the purchasing certainty that only long-term government contracts can provide. Many American companies who retooled their production out of a patriotic sense of duty are now staring down bankruptcy while manufacturing workers face the threat of layoffs. Despite all the efforts that have been taken to re-establish domestic PPE production since the start of the pandemic, there is no doubt that without policy reforms China will permanently secure the PPE market share that the United States is beginning to regain.

Now is the time to seriously reconsider our policies that send U.S. tax dollars to China only to have our access to critical PPE and other health supplies cut off in a crisis. The only path that secures our public health ahead of the next pandemic is a major shift to policies that incentivize robust and redundant U.S. supply chains and broaden the marketplace for these items. Following the model of the Berry Amendment, the Make PPE in America Act and Sec. 4153 will create the demand signal necessary to incentivize private sector investment in PPE manufacturing and support the growth of our public health industrial base.

We need a strong, vibrant, redundant, wholly U.S. PPE supply chain to help protect us from the next public health crisis. We urge you to ensure that the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act extends domestic purchasing requirements for PPE to the four critical departments with the largest federal purchasing power for these products—DHS, HHS, VA, and DoD.

Thank you for your consideration, and we stand ready to assist you and your staffs in any way to help accomplish this fundamental goal.

AFL-CIO

Alliance for American Manufacturing

American Apparel and Footwear Association

American Iron and Steel Institute

American Sheep Institute

Coalition for a Prosperous America

Georgia Association of Manufacturers
INDA: Association of the Nonwoven Fabrics Industry
Narrow Fabrics Institute
National Council of Textile Organizations
Parachute Industry Association
Rhode Island Textile Innovation Network
SEAMS: Association of the U.S. Sewn Products Industry
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Steel Manufacturers Association
U.S. Industrial Fabrics Institute
United States Footwear Manufacturers Association
United Steelworkers
Warrior Protection and Readiness Coalition
Workers United