April 6, 2020

The Honorable Donald Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the National Commission on Correctional Health Care, we are writing to underscore our serious concerns about shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE). Correctional health care workers and correctional officers in jails, prisons and juvenile facilities are on the front lines in extremely challenging environments.

As you are aware, we are facing a severe shortage of PPE for health care workers fighting COVID-19 throughout the country. Often our jails and prisons are forgotten and left out of discussions among federal, state and local leaders. In a recent study NCCHC conducted with researchers at Harvard Kennedy School, only 60% of facilities said they currently have adequate PPE.

There are more than 2 million people currently incarcerated and more than 600,000 correctional health providers and correctional officers. These professionals must report to duty to ensure the safety and security of the employees, the inmates and their communities. As more of them become ill or exposed and must stay in quarantine, the nation’s correctional institutions will face a frightening crisis.

We ask for your help in ensuring that PPE – N95 respirators, masks, gloves, gowns and eye ware – is available to all health care systems and providers including the nation’s correctional institutions to ensure everyone’s safety during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Without adequate PPE, we will have tragic circumstances among the staff and inmates.

We ask that the Administration work with Congress to exhaust every option available to increase PPE production and prioritize distribution to those on the front lines of combating COVID-19 outbreaks.

Thank you for your consideration,

Deborah Ross, CCHP
CEO, National Commission on Correctional Health Care

Robert Morris, MD, CCHP
Chairman, Board of Directors, National Commission on Correctional Health Care