ROSS SPANO
15TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

COMMITTEE ON
SMALL BUSINESS

224 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225–1252

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–0915

March 4, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

As members of the Florida Delegation, we write to express our strong desire for the Administration to prioritize resources to prevent, respond to, and treat outbreaks of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) to states such as Florida that have current cases, a substantial senior population, and high levels of foreign tourism.

As you know, the first cases of the Coronavirus in Florida were confirmed Sunday, March 1, 2020, prompting Governor DeSantis to declare a Public Health Emergency in Florida. Although the Coronavirus initially spread east to other Asian nations, we have seen an accelerated westward spread from China through the Middle East and Europe. We believe it is important to increase assistance to states with the highest levels of international tourism and large populations of seniors to help limit the spread in our communities.

Florida serves as the "Gateway to the Americas" and a major point of ingress to the United States. In 2019, the Department of Commerce recorded that three of the top ten largest airports by number of individuals entering the United States from abroad are in Florida. Additionally, according to the American Association of Port Authorities, the top three ports by cruise passenger traffic are all in Florida. In addition to foreign tourism, Florida is a top domestic tourist destination, attracting over 120 million tourists per year from mostly within the United States. Should Coronavirus spread within Florida, this could risk substantial harm to America's $1.87 trillion tourism industry which accounts for nearly three percent of U.S. GDP. Therefore, protecting Florida from the spread of the virus is essential not only for the wellbeing of Floridians, but for all Americans.

Finally, Florida is home to one of the oldest populations in the country and the second most seniors of any state. According to the National Council on Aging, older adults are at higher risk from Coronavirus because of higher rates of weakened immune systems and chronic conditions. Researchers in China noted that the median age of individuals who died from the disease was 75 years old. They also found that the progression of the disease was faster among people older than 70. As we continue to learn more about Coronavirus, we must prioritize efforts to prevent infection in senior communities and long-term care facilities where Americans who are most vulnerable to this disease live.

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

We respectfully request the Administration prioritize assistance to prevent, respond to, and treat outbreaks of Coronavirus in states such as Florida that have positive cases, significant senior populations, and high instances of foreign tourism. The allocation of funds in a manner that takes all appropriate measures to care for patients currently infected by the virus and stop its continued spread in the state of Florida is critical to stopping further spread in the United States.

Sincerely,

Ross Spano
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress

Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress

Bill Posey
Member of Congress

Brian Mast
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Ted S. Yoho, DVM
Member of Congress

Neal Dunn
Member of Congress

Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress

Michael Waltz
Member of Congress

Daniel Webster
Member of Congress

Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress

John Rutherford
Member of Congress

Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress

W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress