

RAÚL M. GRIJALVA
3RD DISTRICT, ARIZONA

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January 5, 2021

The Honorable Pete Gaynor, Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW.
Washington, DC 20024

The Honorable Alex Azar, Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Robert Redfield, M.D., Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Secretary Azar, Director Gaynor, and Director Redfield,

I am writing to request coordination and immediate deployments of field and/or response teams to the state of Arizona to help fill critical care staff shortages that have brought our hospitals to the brink of crisis. I understand the dire situation across the nation and know resources can be better coordinated. Based on the current indicators, I believe Arizona should be prioritized for staffing assistance.

In Arizona, over 93% of inpatient and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds are in use statewide. Many hospitals are reporting zero ICU availability, excessive emergency room wait times, and are struggling to find hospitals to fulfill their surge transfer patient requests. Transfers, especially to and from remote areas in Arizona, are logistically difficult. The physical, mental, and emotional toll on our health providers, working with little reprieve, is not sustainable.

The current surge now easily outpaces the summer surge, with Arizona facing one of the highest infection rates in the country. According to COVID tracking project, Arizona has the highest number of people hospitalized per million *and* the highest number of new cases per 100k in the nation. The Arizona COVID-19 death rate is also above the United States national average. Banner Health, the largest hospital system in the state, [reports](#) that bed occupancy has grown by 286% since Nov. 1, and that ICUs are at 170% of their normal peak winter volume. University led COVID-19 projections show our hospital situation worsening.

Arizona hospitals report having the physical space and equipment needed to increase desperately needed inpatient beds, however severe staffing shortages are preventing them from taking this step to save lives. Hospitals are competing with other hospitals and states to secure traveling nurses and health staff, resulting in lack of availability and price gouging.

I appreciate the CDC deploying field and remote teams to Arizona during our summer surge and ask that you prioritize the state for further assistance as we face an even more dire situation.

Additionally, I ask that you implement a coordination program to ensure available traveling providers are deployed immediately to areas most in need. It is vital that we work together as a nation to save lives, not leave states pitted against each other in a fight for vital resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raúl M. Grijalva". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'R'.

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress