

JIM COSTA
16TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA
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Congress of the United States
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Washington, DC 20515

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**TRANSATLANTIC LEGISLATORS’
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MEMBER

April 28, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

Thank you for your strong leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your quick actions and steady guidance have helped our state cope in this unpredictable time. Your decision last week to address “testing deserts” by adding 86 additional testing sites will help health officials in Fresno and Merced counties get a better handle on the impacts of this virus. As you know, these two counties, which are in my district, have large rural populations that make it difficult for people to access health care. These counties have, until now, been unable to widely test community members. I cannot say enough how appreciative we are here in the Valley for the additional resources.

While I am thankful for the Merced and Fresno sites, I am concerned that the City of Madera did not receive a new testing facility. This community is also a “desert.” Madera County has only completed 934 tests for its 156,000 population. Health officials and local leaders are deeply concerned about their ability to properly monitor the community.

We have seen the recent outbreak of novel coronavirus has exposed the California health care system in ways we previously did not think were possible. We have all seen daily reminders of hospitals working over capacity and having to make tough decisions as they try to meet this challenge head on. These challenges are only further exacerbated when examining our rural and underserved communities, who often have higher premiums and longer wait times to see a doctor.

That is one reason why it is disappointing that California has chosen to supply testing sites to the counties surrounding Madera, many of which have a higher median income, a lower minority population, much larger medical infrastructure, and all of which have a higher percentage of population tested than in Madera.

As we craft plans to reopen our economies, we know that mass testing across the United States is needed. To leave out underserved communities like Madera – ones without adequate testing -- could easily defeat any success seen in our surrounding counties as stay at home restrictions are gradually lifted.

Fresno Office
855 M Street, Suite 940
Fresno, CA 93721
Phone: (559) 495-1620
Fax: (559) 495-1027

Merced Office
2222 M St, Suite 305
Merced, CA 95340
Phone: (209) 384-1620
Fax: (209) 384-1629

Washington, DC Office
2081 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-3341
Fax: (202) 225-9308

It is my hope that your team will take another look at Madera County and consider adding an additional testing site. I appreciate all of your efforts. Please do not hesitate to contact me, or my staff, if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



JIM COSTA
Member of Congress

CC:

California Health and Human Services Secretary, Mark Ghaly MD, MPH
Director of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, Mark S. Ghilarducci
Senior Counselor to the Governor for Housing and Homelessness, Jason Elliott