

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 23, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer,

As members serving in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), we write to express our desire that the next coronavirus response package include language to enable a strong educational and informational effort, using the broadcast media, to advise and inform the general public as to how best to deal with the current coronavirus outbreak.

Over the past several days, we have learned that our non-English speaking constituents have had limited access to reliable information concerning the COVID-19 response, including official documents, announcements and proclamations from local, state, and federal officials. The lack of information and prevalence of disinformation have demonstrated the urgent need for official announcements to be disseminated effectively and in a multi-lingual way. Our non-English speaking citizens and residents are entitled to better access to information, and in a mainstream method. Our English and non-English speaking populations need to be informed about this pandemic, how it will impact them, and what they need to do in order to limit its spread.

In the absence of medical treatments or vaccines, we know that one of the few means to halt the spread of the virus is through preventive actions by the public. Therefore, local, state, and federal public officials must communicate clear and concise messages that are targeted to local audiences, available in the media they regularly utilize, and in the languages they primarily speak at home.

Domestic radio and television media, including all major radio and TV networks in the country, as well as public broadcasting networks such as the National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting Service, are proven and reliable resources we must utilize to accomplish this goal. Not only are they free media, but they are available in nearly every part of the country on a full-time basis, and transmitted to these specific demographics in their own language. In our experience, the public turns to the domestic broadcast media in times of national or local emergencies, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and fires. This is just such a time.

Congress must prioritize a linguistically- and culturally-inclusive broadcast media-based educational and informational effort that secures public cooperation. This will aid in flattening the curve, and curb the spread of the virus in both English and non-English speaking communities across the country. Further, the federal government must utilize the broadcasters whose programming, from language and service perspectives, reach the many and varied minority groups in this country. We have a strong and vibrant broadcasting community serving our country, and they will be effective partners in this effort .

We ask that any further legislation include robust funding for the development and dissemination of all official public health information, announcements, and proclamations in multiple languages on radio and television networks. Reaching our non-English speaking communities will enable us to more effectively curb the spread of this virus.

Sincerely,

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Lujan
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

Jesus "Chuy" Garcia
Member of Congress

Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress

Norma Torres
Member of Congress

Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress