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Congress of the United States
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Washington, DC 20515-4209

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IN EUROPE (U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)

March 30, 2020

Governor Bill Lee
State Capitol, 1st Floor
600 Dr. Martin L. King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Lee:

I write today to urgently request you issue a mandatory shelter in place order for Tennessee and prohibit gatherings of more than ten people. I am proud to represent the Ninth District of Tennessee that connects Tennessee, Arkansas and Mississippi, but I fear that, without these preventative measures, it will become a hub of illness that will quickly overcome Memphis's health care facilities. I commend your decision to urge Tennesseans to shelter in place, but this virus crosses state and county lines and it is already claiming Tennessee lives. Your order must become mandatory.

Memphis is home to several state of the art hospitals including Regional One Medical Center, Baptist Memorial Hospital, Methodist University and Le Bonheur Children's Hospital. Without shelter in place orders, this virus will continue to spread and these facilities will quickly become overwhelmed. Shelter in place orders are the most effective preventative tool we have at our disposal, and they must be utilized to its fullest extent.

Particularly concerning is the lack of regional hospital access across state lines. Citizens from Arkansas and Mississippi regularly travel to Memphis for medical care and will do the same should they fall ill with COVID-19. To continue to allow residents of Tennessee, Arkansas and Mississippi to travel freely around their states and across state lines protects no one and puts lives at risk.

Memphis Mayor, Jim Strickland, issued a Safer at Home Order effective midnight on March 24, 2020 through midnight April 7, 2020. Additionally, Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris issued a Safer at Home Executive Order for the entire county. These protective measures will not protect Memphians from those still traveling and contributing to the spread of the deadly COVID-19 virus. I urge you to issue mandatory shelter in place orders and restrict large gatherings to protect our citizens and health care workers already putting their lives at risk.

Sincerely,



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

CC:

Senator Lamar Alexander, Tennessee

Senator Marsha Blackburn, Tennessee

Congressman David Kustoff, Tennessee's Eighth Congressional District

Mayor Lee Harris, Mayor of Shelby County, TN

Mayor Jim Strickland, Mayor of Memphis, TN