



MAYOR REX RICHARDSON

October 2, 2024

The Honorable Robert Garcia
United States House of Representatives
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for H.R. 3794 (Garcia)—The FLASH Act

Dear Congressman Garcia,

On behalf of the City of Long Beach (City), I write in support of H.R. 3794, the Fast-track Logistics for Acquiring Supplies in a Hurry Act of 2023, also known as the “FLASH Act”. H.R. 3794 aims to strengthen our nation’s ability to respond to a public health crisis. The City supports legislation and funding to better prepare for and respond to community needs in the event of public health emergencies, pandemics and naturally occurring disasters.

On March 2, 2020, the Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services (LBDHHS) hosted a briefing for the City’s All Hazards Incident Management Team (AHIMT), which consisted of personnel from the Fire Department, Police Department, and the LBDHHS. On the morning of the briefing the LBDHHS requested the mobilization and deployment of the AHIMT, which was the first component in a series of events that would be used to mitigate the coming emergency to the City of Long Beach. On March 4, 2020, the City of Long Beach and City Health Officer declared a city emergency in response to COVID-19, which helped mobilize City resources, accelerate emergency planning, streamline staffing, coordinate agencies across the city, and allow for future reimbursement by the state and federal governments. Despite limited resources and constantly evolving information, the citywide response to COVID-19 was a successful endeavor in mitigating the effects of COVID-19 on the community. Through the end of May 2022, the City conducted more than one million tests, administered over 334,000 vaccines, established a local distribution site, data dashboard, conducted more than 33,927 case investigations and 3,441 contact investigations and provided guidance and assisted in outbreak management and control in over 202 businesses, 187 Long-Term Care facilities, and 307 Schools/Daycares.

One of the earliest challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic was the City’s ability to acquire personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing kits. The increased need for PPE, particularly N-95 masks, brought on by the pandemic quickly depleted the City’s supplies. Other public health jurisdictions and healthcare facilities also found themselves unable to support the demand for PPE. Although the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) was activated to deploy PPE to jurisdictions, most supplies were expired and/or unusable. The City was tasked to purchase PPE from private vendors but the costs of PPE significantly increased due to the national shortage. The City encountered a similar issue with test kits to detect COVID-19. With limited testing supplies, the City’s public health laboratory was forced to limit the number of people who could test for COVID-19 and establish strict criterion for who received a test. This barrier to testing inevitably led to more infections because the City could not conduct widespread screening to detect infection among those who were asymptomatic but still continued to spread the virus.

The FLASH Act would help the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, cut through red tape to quickly purchase and distribute PPE, tests, medical supplies, and vaccines during emergencies. Ultimately, this bill will help the City respond faster to future public health emergencies.

For these reasons, the City supports H.R. 3794.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rex Richardson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mayor Rex Richardson
City of Long Beach

cc: The Honorable Senator Alex Padilla
The Honorable Senator Laphonza Butler
The Honorable Congressmember Nanette Barragan, 44th District