

JOSÉ M. SERRANO

Senator, 29th District

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April 13, 2020

Dr. Mitchell Katz
President and CEO
NYC Health + Hospitals
125 Worth St.
New York, NY 10013

Dear Dr. Katz:

Thank you for your leadership during this unprecedented time in our state's history.

I understand that our entire public hospital system is in distress due to the COVID-19 pandemic and hospitals across New York are currently operating as one network in order to get personnel and supplies to where they are needed most. I am writing because we have been alerted by the Emergency Department personnel at Lincoln Hospital of a severe shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

We have been in communication with NYC Health + Hospitals as well as leaders at every level of government about this issue repeatedly since March 20, when we first became aware of the situation. It was distressing to hear that medical personnel are only being issued one N95 mask for every five days. I understand that these practices meet the current Health + Hospitals guidelines for managing PPE during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, our healthcare professionals deserve more than the minimum standard as they risk their lives fighting against this virus in the South Bronx- one of the areas most heavily affected in this crisis. The hospital system is under unimaginable pressure, but I believe we can achieve our common goals of saving the lives of New Yorkers while also caring for our frontline healthcare workers by getting them the PPE they need to confidently carry out their duties.

I was heartened to see Mayor Bill de Blasio announce that 37 US Air Force doctors, nurses, and respiratory therapists arrived at Lincoln this week as reinforcements to provide some relief for the hardworking medical staff. I am also looking forward to seeing the results of the team headed by former NYPD Commissioner James O'Neill to oversee supplies and personnel at hospitals across the city.

I would like to request that the team overseeing supplies and PPE at Lincoln Hospital establish a direct line of communication with Lincoln staff as well as local leaders through periodic updates on PPE deliveries and distribution. While I know that this is a fast moving situation, I believe clearer lines of communication will avoid confusion and foster a sense of safety for hospital staff.

Finally, we have received reports that Lincoln staff have been presented with a new attendance policy that prevents them getting paid if they take more than one day off – even for family emergencies. I request clarity on this policy, as it has created anxiety among hospital personnel.

Our healthcare workers are bravely saving lives on the front lines of this pandemic. They are heroically going above and beyond to help patients, comfort families, and ensure that New Yorkers get the best care possible during the biggest public health crisis of our generation. We must ensure that they have enough supplies, support, and clear communication from decision-makers to safely and securely do their job.

I look forward to working together to address these urgent matters. Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to further discuss this with me, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office at (212) 828-5829 or at Serrano@nysenate.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jose M. Serrano". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jose M. Serrano
New York State Senate District 29