

THE CORONAVIRUS CONTAINMENT CORPS ACT

Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Representative Andy Levin (D-MI), Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR), and Senator Tina Smith (D-MN)

THE PROBLEM

Experts believe that coronavirus is more contagious than the seasonal flu: on average, every person who has COVID-19 can infect two to three other people. While two or three people may not seem like that many, think of it this way: what if those three infected people each go on to infect three more people? The first person in the chain will have led to twelve cases. To combat COVID-19, we need a nationwide contact tracing program to break the chain of transmission.

Contact tracing is a core public health tool that helps mitigate the spread of infectious diseases. Contact tracers identify a patient, connect with all of the people they may have infected, and help connect potentially infected and confirmed infected people with services and resources. The United States has used contact tracing to stop the spread of tuberculosis and diseases like sexually transmitted infections, and large-scale contact tracing will be critical to stopping COVID-19.

But here's the problem: there are not enough contact tracers in the United States. Since the Great Recession, roughly 50,000 public health jobs have been lost, and public health departments are severely underfunded. In 2019, the United States spent \$265 million less on public health preparedness than it did in 2002. Massive investments are needed to get our public health infrastructure—and our contact tracing capacity—where it needs to be to fight COVID-19 and potential future waves of infection.

THE CORONAVIRUS CONTAINMENT CORPS ACT

Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Andy Levin, along with Senators Jeff Merkley and Tina Smith, are introducing the **Coronavirus Containment Corps Act** to boost the country's capacity to trace and prevent COVID-19. The bill would:

- **Require the CDC to develop a national contact tracing strategy** within 21 days in consultation with state, local, and tribal public health officials, Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations, and experts with knowledge or field experience concerning racial and ethnic disparities in public health and historically marginalized communities. The plan would identify the number of contact tracers, support specialists, and investigators necessary to conduct culturally competent contact tracing.
- **Protect Americans' privacy.** The CDC would be required to include in its strategy plans to prevent the misuse of patient data; ensure automatic data deletion; data minimization, anonymization and security; and prohibit data sharing with and within the federal government with the exception of the CDC and Indian Health Service. It would also protect Tribal data sovereignty.
- **Provide \$10 billion in funding** states and Tribes to hire over 100,000 contact tracers, support specialists, and case investigators and to help public health systems shore up for a potential resurgence of COVID-19 in the Fall.
- **Award \$500 million to state and tribal workforce agencies** to help hire new contact tracers, focusing specifically on Americans who are currently out of work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.