

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

I write to you regarding the dire humanitarian situation in India. In just the past week, India has reported nearly two million confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and more than 11,000 deaths.¹ Hospitals across the country have run out of beds and are contending with rapidly depleting stores of oxygen and ventilators. The nation is in the midst of an urgent humanitarian crisis that requires a robust response from its partners and allies abroad. I urge you to leverage all available tools and resources to help mitigate this spiraling public health crisis.

Last month, amid loosening restrictions and the proliferation of several highly contagious variants, India began experiencing a second wave of COVID-19 cases.² In the last few days and weeks, the situation has further deteriorated and reached alarming new heights. Just yesterday, India reported more than 360,000 new cases and over 3,200 deaths – the highest number of cases in the world for the seventh day straight.³ More than two million cases have been confirmed and more than 10,000 have died in the past week alone.⁴ India now accounts for more than half of all new infections in the world and experts warn that case numbers are likely significantly higher.⁵

The outbreak has completely overwhelmed India's health care system. For the past two weeks, hospitals across the country have been pushed to the brink. Many have completely run out of intensive care unit (ICU) bed space and are now forced to regularly turn away patients.⁶ Oxygen, ventilators, and therapeutics are also in critically short supply.⁷ Hospitals in New Delhi, the

¹ Johns Hopkins University, Coronavirus Resource Center, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

² CNN, "As India breaks another global Covid-19 record and hospitals run out of oxygen, countries pledge assistance and aid," Jessie Yeung, April 26, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/26/india/india-covid-international-aid-intl-hnk/index.html>

³ Johns Hopkins University, Coronavirus Resource Center, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ New York Times, "As Covid-19 Devastates India, Deaths go Undercounted," Jeffrey Gettleman, Sameer Yasir, Hari Kumar, and Suhasini Raj, April 24, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/24/world/asia/india-coronavirus-deaths.html>

⁶ CNBC, "India reports record Covid cases for a fifth straight day with more than 350,000 new infections," Saheli Roy Choudhury, April 26, 2021, <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/04/26/india-reports-record-new-covid-cases-for-fifth-straight-day.html>

⁷ BBC, "Covid-19 in India: Patients struggle at home as hospitals choke," Vikas Pandey, April 26, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56882167>

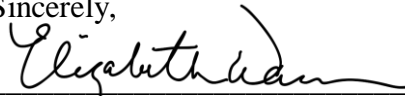
nation's capital, and home to over 21 million people, are experiencing severe shortages of oxygen and are relying on imports from other parts of the country that are also contending with severe outbreaks.⁸ Reports of desperate loved ones of patients turning to the black market for oxygen and other treatments for extortionate prices are widespread.⁹ Mass cremation sites have appeared throughout the country and have been working around the clock.¹⁰ The situation is dire and without immediate assistance from abroad, the crisis has little chance of abating, particularly as vaccines remain in short supply.¹¹

The spread of COVID-19 in India not only threatens its 1.4 billion citizens, but also the rest of the world. Experts warn that the growing number of cases could significantly increase the chance of more contagious or deadly variants emerging and spreading beyond India's borders.¹² The United States cannot sit idly by as millions suffer from this pandemic.

In light of this growing humanitarian crisis, I urge you to leverage all tools and resources available to the United States to provide relief to India. While I am pleased by your commitment to provide transportation and logistics assistance as well as doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine to India, there is a critical need for more to be done. I encourage you to explore all options to direct critically needed resources to India, including through the use of the authorities granted to you by the Defense Production Act (DPA) to direct companies to both prioritize the production of critical materials such as ventilators, personal protective equipment (PPE), and vaccine materials for shipment to India, and to transfer the know-how required to produce these tools, including with the World Health Organization, so more manufacturers can rapidly come online around the world.¹³ Finally, I encourage you to divert any excess supply of ventilators, PPE, oxygen, diagnostic equipment, as well as vaccines to India to help treat those in need and mitigate the spread of the virus.

India is in the midst of a humanitarian crisis that threatens its 1.4 billion citizens, and billions more around the world. I urge you to leverage all resources and explore all tools available to the United States to alleviate this crisis.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

⁸ CNN, "As India breaks another global Covid-19 record and hospitals run out of oxygen, countries pledge assistance and aid," Jessie Yeung, April 26, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/26/india/india-covid-international-aid-intl-hnk/index.html>

⁹ BBC, "Covid-19 in India: Patients struggle at home as hospitals choke," Vikas Pandey, April 26, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56882167>

¹⁰ Reuters, "Mass cremations begin as India's capital faces deluge of COVID-19 deaths," Danish Siddiqui, April 22, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/mass-cremations-begin-indias-capital-faces-deluge-covid-19-deaths-2021-04-23/>

¹¹ The Wall Street Journal, "India's Covid Surge Is Most Ferocious Yet. 'Spreading Like Wildfire,'" Vibhuti Agarwal, Shan Li, Suryatapa Bhattacharya, April 25, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/indias-covid-surge-is-most-ferocious-yet-spreading-like-wildfire-11619388584>

¹² *Id.*

¹³ World Health Organization, "COVID-19 Technology Access Pool," <https://www.who.int/initiatives/covid-19-technology-access-pool>.