



## City of Niagara Falls County of Niagara

May 1, 2020

The Honorable Admiral Brett Giroir  
Assistant Secretary for Health  
US Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independent Ave SW  
Washington DC 20201

Dear Admiral Giroir:

As city and county officials representing the incorporated city of Niagara Falls, New York, we write to you today to join the call of our Congressman, Brian Higgins, regarding the urgent need for COVID-19 testing within city limits, and urge the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to make Niagara Falls a priority location for the establishment of retail self-swab testing locations.

We are several months into this crisis and yet our ability to perform enough COVID-19 tests to identify the sick and stop the spread of this virus is woefully inadequate. In Niagara County, the Niagara Falls accounts for one-quarter of all COVID-19 cases in the county, but there is currently not a single continuous testing site up and running in the City.

Last week, HHS awarded \$73.2 million to retailers like Rite Aid and Walgreens to establish walk-up, self-swab testing locations across the country.<sup>1</sup> Niagara Falls residents are desperately in need of this kind of testing access. Roughly a third of all City residents are nonwhite, and a significant number of City residents live below the poverty line.<sup>2</sup> As you know, poor communities and communities of color tend to have higher rates of pre-existing conditions that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19. Moreover, many residents of the City of Niagara Falls rely on public transportation, rendering drive-through testing sites, as well as other testing sites operating outside the City, unusable. These populations need walk-up testing sites right in their communities and they need them today.

Community spread is already a very real danger in smaller cities like Niagara Falls. If we do not make a concerted effort to rapidly expand testing, these high-risk, underserved communities are going to continue to disproportionately pay the price. COVID-19 testing must be made regularly available and accessible to everyone who needs it, and I therefore strongly urge HHS to work with their partners to establish retail testing locations in the City as quickly as possible.

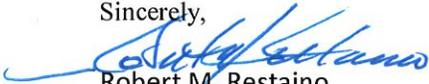
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<sup>1</sup> "COVID-19 Self-Swab and Point-of-Care Testing Public-Private Partnership." Online at [https://beta.sam.gov/opp/e2c1382fcab04090a4e2f592a7b35032/view?index=opp&page=1&organization\\_id=100011943,100004222](https://beta.sam.gov/opp/e2c1382fcab04090a4e2f592a7b35032/view?index=opp&page=1&organization_id=100011943,100004222).

<sup>2</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Quick Facts Niagara Falls city, New York." Online at <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/niagarafallscitynewyork>.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Restaino  
Mayor, City of Niagara Falls



Christopher Robins  
County Legislator-5th District



Mark Grozio  
County Legislator-3<sup>rd</sup> District



Dennis Virtuoso  
County Legislator-6<sup>th</sup> District  
Minority Leader



Owen Steed  
County Legislator-4<sup>th</sup> District