

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Joseph J. Simons  
Chairman  
Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Chairman Simons:

We write to express our serious concerns with reports of price gouging in the wake of the COVID-19 public health emergency. As reported by the *New York Times* and others, a number of essential items have become scarce.<sup>1</sup> Healthcare workers are being asked to reuse personal protective equipment—like masks and single-use gowns—because their supplies are running low.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, many Americans are unable to find essential household items such as hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies in their local stores or online marketplaces. All the while, profiteers who have cleaned the shelves of hundreds of stores are hoarding these very same supplies or charging unconscionable prices.

This misconduct places critical goods out of reach for those who need them most. Americans who fear for their own and their loved ones' health and safety should not be further victimized. In light of these concerns and the urgency of this rapidly evolving health crisis, we strongly urge the Federal Trade Commission to take immediate action to protect consumers from price gouging during this declared public health emergency. In the meantime, we will continue to pursue other means, including legislation, to assist your efforts and help consumers.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Jack Nicas, *He Has 17,700 Bottles of Hand Sanitizer and Nowhere to Sell Them*, NEW YORK TIMES (Mar. 14, 2020) ([www.nytimes.com/2020/03/14/technology/coronavirus-purell-wipes-amazon-sellers.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/14/technology/coronavirus-purell-wipes-amazon-sellers.html)); Jessica Guynn & Kelly Tyko, *Gouge Much? Purell for \$149, Face Masks for \$20: Coronavirus Price Hikes Are Making Everyone Mad*, USA TODAY (Mar. 3, 2020) ([www.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/03/03/coronavirus-hand-sanitizer-face-masks-price-gouging-amazon-walmart-ebay/4933920002/](http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/03/03/coronavirus-hand-sanitizer-face-masks-price-gouging-amazon-walmart-ebay/4933920002/)).

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Lisa Kashinsky, Author, *Massachusetts Hospitals Face Shortages of Protective Equipment in Coronavirus Outbreak*, BOSTON HERALD (Mar. 14, 2020, 5:53 PM) ([www.bostonherald.com/2020/03/14/massachusetts-hospitals-face-shortages-of-protective-equipment-in-coronavirus-outbreak/](http://www.bostonherald.com/2020/03/14/massachusetts-hospitals-face-shortages-of-protective-equipment-in-coronavirus-outbreak/)).

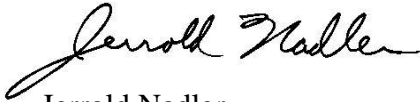
The Honorable Joseph J. Simons

March 17, 2020

Page 2

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

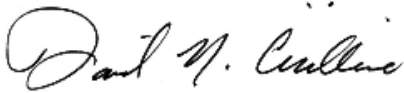
Sincerely,



Jerrold Nadler  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary



Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce



David N. Cicilline  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Antitrust,  
Commercial and Administrative  
Law



Jan Schakowsky  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Consumer  
Protection and Commerce

The Honorable Joseph J. Simons

March 17, 2020

Page 3

cc: The Honorable Jim Jordan  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Greg Walden  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law of the Committee on  
the Judiciary

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce of the Committee on Energy  
and Commerce