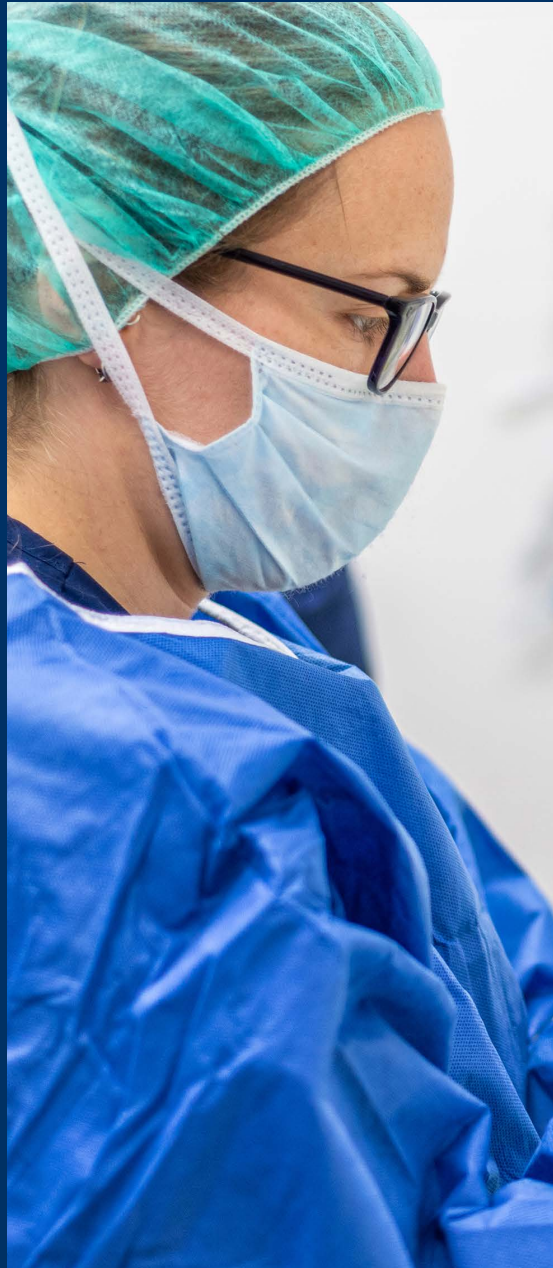


# SENATOR TILLIS' PLAN OF ACTION TO PROTECT NORTH CAROLINIANS, DEFEAT COVID-19, AND RETURN SAFELY TO OUR LIVES



**THOM TILLIS**  
U.S. SENATOR *for* NORTH CAROLINA

## **Senator Tillis' Plan of Action To Protect North Carolinians, Defeat COVID-19, and Return Safely To Our Lives**

Our families, our communities, and our country have been in a war against COVID-19 over the last several months, a fight that continues to this day. The highly-contagious virus has taken countless lives and forced us to shut down sectors of our economy in order to stop the spread to protect our loved ones and neighbors.

My top priority as your U.S. Senator is protecting the physical and economic health of you and your family. We are learning more about the virus with every passing day, and scientists are making vast improvements in life-saving therapeutics and vaccine development. While Congress has provided much-needed resources to individuals, businesses, health care professionals, first responders, and medical researchers, I recognize that the work is not over.

Our frontline health care workers and first responders must have adequate personal protective equipment and other medical supplies to treat patients. Medical researchers must have sustained, robust investment to find and test vaccines, therapeutics, and curatives. Hospitals and health care systems must keep critical medical service lines open, even in a pandemic. Businesses must do their part to keep their staff and customers safe. Industries must be able to easily pivot to assist in the response. Local, state, and federal health agencies must share data and communicate.

And perhaps most importantly: every single American must do their own individual part to keep themselves and their loved ones safe and healthy. Our state and nation are in this together, and we must unite and understand how our own actions play a significant role in saving lives and helping us safely return to life as normal as soon as possible.

We cannot afford to completely shut our great nation down to the extent that we did in the early days of the pandemic. Doing so would be devastating to families across the nation. Instead, we must listen to the scientific experts and all do our part to implement best practices that will save lives, help prevent future shutdowns, and get this pandemic behind us.

Over the last several months, I've held more than 50 telephone town halls with North Carolinians in all 100 counties in our great state. I've learned a lot from the personal stories of so many North Carolinians who have been personally impacted by this virus: North Carolinians who tragically lost a loved one to the virus, employers and employees who lost their jobs and their livelihoods, and the parents and caregivers who are feeling the immense daily stress that this pandemic is causing on their families and communities.

As your Senator, I have cast partisan politics aside and done what's best for North Carolina. That's why I've worked across the aisle to enact the Paycheck Protection Program to save hundreds of thousands of North Carolina employers and jobs. It's why I worked across the aisle to secure billions of dollars to assist North Carolina's hospitals and medical providers on the frontlines.

And it's why I'm offering a plan of action to protect the health of North Carolinians and defeat COVID-19 so we can not only return safely to our lives, but also be prepared for any future health emergencies. My plan is based on what I've heard, seen and learned speaking with North Carolinians, from small business owners to single parents to health care workers treating COVID patients.

We are all in this together, and we all have a major role to play. It starts with personal responsibility of practicing social distancing and wearing a facial covering. And it requires our elected officials, health care leaders, business community, among others, to play a pivotal role in how we safely get back to life as normal.

I hope you read my plan and please stay safe and healthy,



Senator Thom Tillis

## **Senator Tillis' Plan of Action To Protect North Carolinians, Defeat COVID-19, and Return Safely To Our Lives**

### **ENSURE WE ALL DO OUR INDIVIDUAL PART IN THE WAR AGAINST COVID-19**

- Listen to our medical professionals and follow CDC guidelines.
- Wear a facial covering to slow the spread.

### **PROTECT N.C. JOBS AND SMALL BUSINESSES**

- Keep employees and customers safe through proactive safety plans.
- Protect small businesses from junk lawsuits.
- Pass Tillis' bill to protect consumers from price gouging.

### **STRENGTHEN AMERICA'S PPE SUPPLY CHAIN**

- Pass Tillis' bill to improve the Strategic National Stockpile and strengthen domestic PPE manufacturing.
- Ensure the safety of PPE for our frontline workers.
- Improve pivot capacity to enable businesses to accelerate the production of PPE.

### **BOOST HOSPITAL PREPAREDNESS, TESTING, AND DATA SHARING**

- Promote Public/Private partnerships to advance testing and surveillance to help stop the spread.
- Improve data sharing to better identify and assist areas of greatest need.

### **SUPPORT AND PROTECT AMERICA'S MEDICAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

- Push a strong commitment to sustained, robust medical research funding.
- Punish bad foreign actors like Russia and China for hacking and trying to sabotage our vaccine research.

### **FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN, PARENTS, AND SCHOOLS**

- Assistance for child care centers to help them safely reopen and provide states with flexibility to implement plans to support child care services.
- Assistance for states to support the safe reopening of schools and support for long-distance learning.

## RECOGNIZING OUR INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE WAR AGAINST COVID-19



COVID-19 has had a dramatic impact on the day to day life of virtually every single North Carolinian. While essential workers have been on the frontlines to serve others and keep our health care system and economy running, many families have stayed home and have tried to adjust to North Carolina's phased reopening process.

While we saw initial success in our collective social distancing efforts, we are understandably frustrated to see a recent increase in cases in most states, including North Carolina. No one, including me, wants to see a rollback in the progress we've made to start safely returning life to normal.

Winning the war against COVID-19 requires all North Carolinians to understand the crucial individual role they play. If we aren't fulfilling our own individual responsibility to protect ourselves and those around us, the pandemic will continue, our loved ones and our neighbors will continue to get sick, and we will keep our loved ones from returning to work and our children and grandchildren from returning to school full-time.

We are all on the same team and we all want the same things. We all want to make sure our families and loved ones stay healthy. We all want to defeat COVID-19 and safely return to work and our normal lives.

### **LISTEN TO MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS AND FOLLOW THE CDC GUIDELINES**

Following the CDC's health guidelines is not a matter of listening to the government. It's a matter of listening to the doctors and medical professionals we trust so we can protect the people we love.

I've heard some complaints about a change in messaging for some CDC recommendations over time. That is because we are confronted with a new virus we are still learning about every single day. Our medical professionals provide the best advice with the best data and science available to them at a given time. The more we learn about the virus, the better we can stop the spread and keep each other healthy. That is already

happening, with doctors and scientists testing new therapeutics that have already played a role in helping save lives.

COVID-19 is an aggressive and dangerous virus that literally eats away at our respiratory system. Even though the recovery rate is generally high for the low-risk population, there is still a significant high-risk population that is vulnerable to serious, significant, or life-threatening complications. And we still don't have solid research on the physical, long-term impact of COVID-19 for those who have recovered. We all have a responsibility to listen to medical professionals, take their warnings seriously, and do our best to follow their guidance.

Please visit the CDC website for up to date guidance on [how to protect yourself](#), what to do if you [think you are sick](#), and tips on how to go about [your daily life](#).

## WEAR FACIAL COVERINGS

One of the top recommendations from the CDC and our state and local officials is to wear a facial covering. I understand that a lot of North Carolinians don't like the government telling them what to do, and I'm one of them. But wearing a facial covering is about listening to health experts, not the government, and it's why I've been wearing one regularly for months.

Wearing a facial covering is a visible sign of courtesy and respect for others. That's because while facial coverings can help protect you from contracting the virus, they are especially effective at protecting those around you from being exposed if you have COVID-19.

We should all remember that [scientists believe that about half](#) of all infected people will never show any symptoms, meaning that they could unknowingly be spreading the virus to others if they don't wear a facial covering or practice social distancing. If you feel completely healthy and you're at low-risk for any complications, you should feel blessed but also go about your life assuming you could be asymptomatic. Wear that facial covering to protect your loved ones and the strangers you might come across when you go out.

And remember that wearing a facial covering not only helps save lives, it will also help save jobs. One [study](#) found that 80% of Americans regularly wearing a facial covering when they go out would actually be more effective at flattening the curve than a strict economic shutdown with social distancing.

So please – wear a facial covering when you go out. It's about looking out for our neighbors in our communities. It's about doing our very small part to get the Americans who lost their jobs back to work. And ultimately, it's about being responsible, respectful, and patriotic Americans.

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## PROTECT NORTH CAROLINA JOBS AND SMALL BUSINESSES

### KEEPING EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMERS SAFE

Health care systems across our nation are not the only ones adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as virtually every industry from agriculture to finance to construction has been and will continue to be harmed. Our nation's service and retail trade industries came to a grinding halt. Fashion, hospitality, food service, personal care and many other businesses were forced to close in an attempt to slow the spread.

I proudly supported the creation of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which provided forgivable loans to 121,917 North Carolina businesses totaling \$12.4 billion. The PPP has helped support or save 1.2 million jobs in our state. After hearing feedback and concerns from many of North Carolina’s job creators, I worked across the aisle and succeeded in pushing for improvements to the program to help more of our small businesses and employees.

While the PPP undoubtedly helped so many of our small businesses during the economic shutdown and many are now slowly and safely resuming operations, employers and employees still face significant challenges in the months ahead.

Businesses must now work to ensure they offer their employees and staff a safe and healthy environment. Additionally, small businesses are under threat by an army of trial lawyers who are trying to enrich themselves from the pandemic by filing frivolous lawsuits against local businesses.



**The Solution: Businesses should take proactive measures to implement best practice plans to limit exposure to COVID-19 and future viruses and ensure the continued safety and confidence of staff and customers.**

- COVID-19 will have lasting effects on both economic activity and business operations. That is why it is imperative for businesses to implement an abiding plan to ensure the continued safety and confidence of staff and consumers. Businesses should demonstrate best practices, including social distancing, “no mask, no service” requirements (when applicable), limited occupancy, frequent disinfecting, and physical infrastructure improvements such as touchless payment methods and protective barriers at point of sale locations.
- Just as North Carolina has done with the “[Count On Me NC](#)” program, businesses can and should participate in “evidence-based COVID-19 training developed by public health officials and food safety experts,” which “provides a vital roadmap for reopening.” Once completed, this “Safe Business” certification can be displayed in businesses, increasing both the safety and confidence of staff and customers alike.

## PROTECTING OUR SMALL BUSINESSES FROM JUNK LAWSUITS

In order to get our economy back on track, businesses must be confident in their ability to safely resume operations. Business owners, managers, and employees want to keep themselves and their customers safe. Implementing all best practices and safety measures significantly reduces the likelihood of spreading or contracting COVID-19, and trial lawyers shouldn't be able to file frivolous lawsuits against hardworking employers doing everything they can to keep everyone safe.

**The Solution: Congress must act quickly to provide liability protection for businesses.**

- Congress needs to protect businesses that implement best practice plans and take responsible actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Responsible businesses should not be defenseless and at the mercy of greedy trial lawyers seeking to enrich themselves by falsely claiming negligence in junk lawsuits.

## PROTECTING CONSUMERS FROM PRICE GOUGING

When the COVID-19 pandemic began in the United States, many Americans found prices on necessities and everyday goods shot up as people bought items in large batches. My office has also heard stories about bad actors in different states and countries who were attempting to upcharge prices on PPE to rip-off our health care systems.

**The Solution: Increase penalties for price gougers during a national emergency.**

- I introduced the Ending Price-Gouging During Emergencies Act to punish individuals and businesses that price gouge essential medical supplies and other goods and services during a state of national emergency in response to pandemics and natural disasters. Low-life price gougers who try to rip-off their fellow Americans and our medical professionals need to be criminally prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. My bill will make them think twice before they try to price gouge Americans during an emergency, and if they still try to price gouge, my bill will hold them accountable.

## STRENGTHEN THE PPE SUPPLY CHAIN

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the need for America to improve our supply chain resiliency and reduce our dependency on China for medical supplies.

The Chinese government deliberately misled the world about COVID-19 and then tried to cover it up. One [study found](#) that had the Chinese government told the world the truth about COVID-19 and acted only 3 weeks earlier, cases of the virus could have been cut by 95 percent and could have spared the world of this pandemic.

At the same time the Chinese government was lying to the world, it was [secretly purchasing and hoarding the world's supply of face masks](#), purchasing 56 million respirators in just one week. By the time the pandemic hit the United States and the rest of the world, we initially saw supply shortages of face masks. To make matters worse, a high volume of the personal protective equipment (PPE) sourced from entities controlled by the Chinese government that were sent to the United States turned out to be counterfeit, directly jeopardizing the lives of American health care workers on the frontlines.



America needs to build supply chain resiliency to not only combat any future waves of COVID-19, but to also prepare and respond to future public health emergencies. That’s why I’m fighting to build up America’s capacity to create and distribute medical supplies and PPE in order to end our dependency on China.

**The Solution: Strengthen our capacity to produce more domestic PPE.**

**EXPAND THE STRATEGIC NATIONAL STOCKPILE (SNS) AND STRENGTHEN DOMESTIC PPE MANUFACTURING TO PREPARE FOR FUTURE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES**

- I have introduced bipartisan legislation, the Medical Supplies for Pandemics Act of 2020, to incentivize manufacturers of critical supplies to strengthen supply chains and establish domestic reserves of critical medical supplies for future public health emergencies. My legislation would authorize \$500 million annually through fiscal year 2023 to implement a supply chain flexibility manufacturing program to:
  - Create incentives for the domestic manufacture of medical supplies to enhance supply chain elasticity;
  - Establish and maintain domestic reserves of critical medical supplies like personal protective equipment and diagnostic tests; and
  - Work with distributors of medical supplies to manage domestic reserves held by the Strategic National Stockpile by refreshing and replenishing supply stocks.

**ENSURING THE SAFETY OF PPE FOR OUR FRONTLINE HEALTH CARE WORKERS**

- The Chinese government has been sending the United States counterfeits of N95 respirators – which are finding their way into the hands of heroic first responders, putting their lives in danger. I will be introducing legislation cracking down on the Chinese government’s sale of counterfeit PPE to the United States.



## **IMPROVE PIVOT CAPACITY TO HELP BUSINESSES ACCELERATE PPE PRODUCTION**

Many businesses across North Carolina made the decision to repurpose operations to fit the needs of their community, our state, and our nation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The country saw businesses reinventing their services and the way of delivery. Distilleries began producing hand sanitizer, furniture companies began manufacturing PPE, commercial airlines began offering cargo flights, and car manufacturers began assembling medical devices. However, this pivot didn't happen immediately, weeks and months passed before these businesses were able to retool their operations to respond to COVID-19.

Businesses should be able to pivot operations more easily to provide much-needed supplies, resources, and services during future public health emergencies. To be better equipped, we must establish a streamlined process for identifying and executing pivot capacity, which can include a pre-registration and/or provisional approval for businesses able and willing to shift operations during a public health emergency. Amassing a database that includes specific goods and services needed in the midst of a pandemic, as well as businesses willing to produce these goods and supplies would allow for a more effective and efficient response.

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## **BOOST HOSPITAL PREPAREDNESS, TESTING, AND DATA SHARING**



As state governments implemented social distancing policies to slow the spread of COVID-19, hospitals and medical providers throughout North Carolina and the rest of the nation were faced with the difficult decision to postpone procedures that were not deemed “essential.” While this decision was critical at the time, it took a major toll on our health care system and the health and well-being of North Carolinians.

I've personally heard heartbreaking stories from North Carolinians who were forced to postpone their cancer treatment, stories from concerned parents whose children weren't able to access critical mental health services, and stories from doctors and health professionals who have had their patients' care affected and practices shuttered by the decision to postpone all "elective" procedures.

We must ensure our health care system is able to maintain critical service lines. Chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, multiple sclerosis (MS), and Alzheimer's do not stop their progression during a pandemic, and we must ensure that those critical treatments do not face further disruptions as we battle COVID-19 and other infectious diseases in the future.

**The Solution:** Ensure and increase health system preparedness through increased disease surveillance, widespread testing, better data sharing, and continued medical research.

## PROMOTING PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS TO ADVANCE TESTING AND SURVEILLANCE

Testing is a foundational step in identifying hotspots of a pandemic. We must understand the extent of community spread, either through diagnostic or antibody testing, in order to inform decisions. Long-lasting public/private partnerships between federal health agencies, academic medical centers, and clinical laboratories, among others, will allow for a quicker, more effective response to public health emergencies. These partnerships have the ability to produce increased testing capacity, which, importantly, leads to valuable insight on the scope of spread and allocation of resources.

Public health departments continue to be an essential link in the chain when it comes to public health responses. They possess community-based, granular knowledge and data that is critically important. These departments across the country can easily identify medically underserved communities, historically marginalized communities of color, and certain industrial hotspots such as agriculture processing facilities. With this knowledge, departments are able to steer much-needed resources to the highest-risk communities to mitigate the spread.

This is why I have been doing everything in my capacity as a U.S. Senator to support North Carolina's medical institutions as they drive innovation to increase and improve testing. Recently, I worked with Wake Forest Baptist Health, and helped secure a \$27 million contract that will support Wake Forest's COVID-19 antibody and surveillance research, which will be critical in controlling and defeating this pandemic.

## DATA AND DATA SHARING

Exponential advances in technology have resulted in an increased ability to not only collect, but sift through massive amounts of data to analyze and recognize patterns. Enormous amounts of detail-rich data, which are frequently unintelligible must be organized in a way that allows public health officials to predict, prevent, and mitigate future public health crises.

Data is only useful when it is widely-accessible and easily aggregated. Federal and state agencies must begin sharing important information that can help inform decisions. The production of, sharing with, interaction between, and organization of shared data will help federal, state, and local public health agencies identify areas of greatest need.

## SUPPORT AND PROTECT AMERICAN MEDICAL RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

### COMMITMENT TO MEDICAL RESEARCH

I've been leading the bipartisan push for more funding for COVID-19 medical research. Medical research breakthroughs, including vaccines, cures and treatments are the culmination of decades of hard work by researchers, scientists, and doctors. This underscores the importance of having a sustained, robust strategy for funding medical and scientific research.

North Carolina and the United States are blessed to have world-class medical researchers, academic institutions, scientists, and doctors who work tirelessly to improve the health of the country. Our medical schools and teaching hospitals across the country are playing a unique, dual role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only are these academic health systems on the frontline of treating COVID-positive patients, they are also on the frontline of cutting-edge research, developing diagnostic tests and treatment options for COVID-19.

The CARES Act allocated over \$945 million to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which is being used to leverage expertise and fund applications focusing on virus transmission, developing diagnostic tests, identifying potential treatments, and ultimately developing a safe and effective vaccine. While this is a good start, we need more research funding in the coming months and years.

**The Solution: Push a strong commitment to sustained, robust medical research funding and protect our national efforts to develop a vaccine.**

Every year that I have been in the Senate, I have signed onto bipartisan letters requesting a strong commitment to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the annual appropriations process.

When it comes to supporting COVID-19 research, we need the federal government to:

1. Cover supplements for research grants and contracts caused by the pandemic, including additional salary support and/or research related ramp-up costs;
2. Provide emergency relief to sustain research support personnel and base operating costs for core research facilities and user-funded research services until such time as facilities reopen and research activities return to pre-pandemic activity levels; and
3. Fund additional graduate student and postdoc fellowships, traineeships, and research assistantships for up to two years. Graduate students who could not complete their degrees due to the pandemic should be given priority for graduate fellowships and other forms of support so they can complete their research and degrees.

### PROTECTING AMERICA'S VACCINE DEVELOPMENT

While our scientists made incredible progress in the development of a vaccine, they are being confronted with an external threat: hostile governments, including [China](#) and [Russia](#), have been attempting to hack and sabotage America's vaccine research. We must punish these bad actors and protect the progress of America's medical innovation.



## FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN, PARENTS, AND SCHOOLS

I understand the strain and major disruptions that the school closures this spring have placed on our children, parents, teachers, and communities in North Carolina. Not only do disruptions to in-person learning have substantial impacts on a student’s education and create significant learning deficiencies, they can also interrupt crucial supportive services students and their families rely heavily on, such as school nutrition and afterschool programs. It is my highest priority to ensure that schools are safely opened as soon as possible in a way that protects the overall health and well-being of all students, families, educators, and school employees. When physical reopening is not possible, we need to make sure students are receiving the highest quality education possible.

Additionally, we must recognize that child care services are crucial to our economic recovery as parents begin to return to their physical workplace. We need to provide federal assistance for child care providers so they can continue to offer critical, affordable child care for working mothers and fathers in North Carolina and ensure they have the support needed to protect the health of children and staff.

### SUPPORTING CHILD CARE SERVICES FOR PARENTS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

I recently joined Senator Joni Ernst and HELP Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander in introducing the Back to Work Child Care Grants Act of 2020.

This critical legislation supports child care services by:

- Providing 9 months of financial assistance for providers to open, welcome children safely, and ensure a robust child care sector is available for families;
- Allowing states to design state-specific plans to support child care centers, operators, and providers in their state;
- Providing grants based on need and fixed costs incurred by child care providers due to COVID-19;
- Requiring all providers receiving assistance under this program to follow all state and local health and safety guidelines.

**SAFELY REOPENING SCHOOLS AND PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH QUALITY EDUCATION**

The federal and state government should invest in the safety and education of our K-12 students. We should make sure schools implement proactive safety measures, many of which have been outlined by the Cooper administration and the CDC.

- Conduct symptom and daily temperature screenings for any individual entering school facilities and buildings.
- Implement and follow health and safety actions and recommendations from the CDC:
  - Promote healthy hygiene practices;
  - Implement cleaning and disinfection procedures;
  - Follow social distancing guidelines;
  - Wear masks and PPE, especially when social distancing is not possible.
- Ensure alternative remote learning and operational plans for high risk students and educators.
- Establish a process for potential students/staff who become sick and develop reporting procedures.
- Ensure that school policies are flexible, adaptable, and quickly responsive as they regularly and clearly communicate and monitor developments regarding levels of viral transmission and cases with state and local authorities, employees, and families.