United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 9, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge your Administration to immediately disburse much-needed assistance to the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic threatening hundreds of thousands of lives in the United States and abroad, we believe these funds are crucial to saving lives and livelihoods in the West Bank, Gaza, Israel, and throughout the region.

As a result of executive actions and legislation, the Palestinian people are no longer receiving U.S. security, economic, or humanitarian assistance. In December 2019, however, you signed the Promoting Security and Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act of 2019 (PSJVTA, §903 of the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, P.L. 116-94) into law. We worked on a bipartisan basis to pass this legislation, which encourages the disbursement of aid to Palestinians while allowing U.S. victims of terrorism and their families to have their day in court. The Further Consolidated Appropriations Act also included $75 million for security assistance in the West Bank and $75 million for the "humanitarian and development needs of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza." The Palestinian people need this aid now more than ever, as the implementation of these aid provisions will promote the health and security of the Palestinian people and their neighbors in Israel.

In Gaza, home to nearly two million Palestinians, health and sanitation systems have been devastated by years of import restrictions and political infighting between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. Over 80 percent of the population relies on international assistance, and social distancing measures are difficult to ensure in Gaza's 140 square miles. Another three million Palestinians face numerous barriers to health access throughout the West Bank. According to the World Health Organization, there are only 3.9 doctors, nurses, and other health care workers per 1,000 people in these areas, below the international benchmark of 4.45 per 1,000 people.[1] These conditions inevitably weaken the ability of Palestinians to care for themselves and one another in the midst of a global health crisis.

[1] "Right to Health 2018," World Health Organization, 2018. http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/palestine/documents/who_right_to_health_2018_web-final.pdf?ua=1.

The spread of COVID-19 compels us to act boldly in the international arena. We recognize that the White House has taken bold steps on issues relating to the Israeli and Palestinian people, and we urge you to do so again now by implementing the aid provisions passed by Congress and signed into law in December 2019. These funds will be a crucial contribution to international efforts to fight COVID-19.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent request.

Sincerely,

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

/s/
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator