

# United States Senate

COMMITTEES:  
ARMED SERVICES  
BANKING, HOUSING, AND  
URBAN AFFAIRS  
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR  
AND PENSIONS  
AGING

April 23, 2020

Governor Kay Ivey  
600 Dexter Avenue  
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Dear Governor Ivey,

While there has been much debate about whether it is appropriate or not to begin opening the economy, I believe it is important to be thinking about opportunities beyond simply what our business landscape looked like before this health crisis began. In that spirit, I am writing today to urge you to consider appointing a health care manufacturing task force to explore ways for Alabama to be at the forefront of creating a robust healthcare manufacturing sector for the United States.

Alabama is blessed with a talented workforce and an environment that businesses find attractive. Our state has transformed in recent decades thanks to an influx of industries like the automobile industry. Unfortunately, at the same time, some longstanding businesses have closed, leaving some pockets of the state in peril. For instance, it has been reported that Goodyear is unlikely to reopen its facility in Gadsden. While I had hoped that Goodyear could have found a way to keep the plant operating, its likely closing is reflective of the ongoing transition in our state's economy and adds urgency to the need to look for new opportunities to put local residents and others throughout the state back to work.

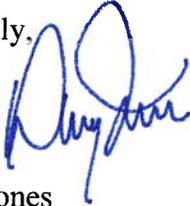
Clearly the COVID-19 virus has caused us all to rethink the way we look at a lot of things. One of those things is the way we do business. The shortage of PPE, ventilators, and other vital healthcare related items that we have seen in the course of dealing with this pandemic has demonstrated that our supply chains in the health care space are too dependent on foreign suppliers and not as diversified as they need to be. While a number of businesses in Alabama and across the country are stepping up and repurposing facilities during this pandemic to make these critical items, it is likely that they will return to their original purpose once the crisis has subsided. It is my view, however, that the United States needs to make a concerted effort to reduce our dependence on foreign suppliers of items essential to the delivery of healthcare, just as we did with foreign suppliers of oil a number of years ago. Rather than just focusing on the challenge in front of us, we should look to the future. You have an opportunity to chart Alabama's course for years to come.

A health care manufacturing taskforce could look to Alabama's existing infrastructure. In some cases, idle facilities around the state might be repurposed to produce health care supplies and equipment not only in the near term, but in the future. For others, a new facility might be the best option. Regardless of the approach taken, Alabama could be at the forefront in both protecting our country's health and creating and maintaining good paying jobs.

Just as Alabama has become an automotive center for the country, so it could be a health care manufacturing hub. Alabama has internationally recognized health care research facilities from Hudson Alpha in Huntsville to UAB and Southern Research in Birmingham to USA in Mobile. It makes sense that the State is also positioned to play a large role in the expansion of domestic health care manufacturing that I believe is sure to come. We can build on our existing companies like Steris, Evonik, Baxter and others, to add new ones. Just as the automotive industry has changed Alabama's economy since Mercedes arrived in the 1990's, a concerted effort to expand health care manufacturing in Alabama will help grow our population, raise our standard of living, and improve the quality of life for generations to come.

I hope you and your team will give this proposal serious consideration. Certainly I stand ready to assist you in any way I can.

Sincerely,



Doug Jones  
United States Senator

CC Greg Canfield