

## EVERYBODY'S COLUMN

### Funding for Covid-19 tests is urgently needed

"Congress hasn't provided additional funding to replenish the nation's stockpile of tests." This note is posted on Erie County Department of Health's website. Meanwhile, Erie County continues to experience "high transmission" for Covid-19.

As a registered nurse, I am outraged that Congress has failed to renew funding to fight Covid-19. Will Erie County and NY State step in to provide free tests and vaccines as the clock ticks to zero federal support or will we return to the mercy of the health insurance industry?

It is true that US hospitalizations and deaths from Covid-19 have fallen from critical levels, but for the past two months they have held steady at 400 deaths and 5,000 newly hospitalized individuals per day. These numbers are simply unacceptable for a preventable condition, especially as the urgent impending health care crisis of long Covid is unfolding right in front of us.

Availability of free rapid antigen tests is invaluable to keeping our community healthy. Not only have they allowed us the freedom to test in the comfort of our homes and made in-person events safer, they also have provided immediate results that can lead to accessing treatment that is only effective if administered in the first five days from developing symptoms.

This nurse urges you to join me in contacting your US Representative and Senators today. Please tell them to continue funding what we know works: free Covid-19 vaccines, testing and improved ventilation for our schools and work places. Lives depend on it.

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