

TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Terry Canales
District 40

March 30, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor, State of Texas
Texas State Capitol, Room 2S.1
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Governor Abbott:

I want to thank you again for your steadfast leadership in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. Every day we are learning new information about how devastating this disease is, and I appreciate your leadership in tackling the varying problems that have emerged. With that said, one of the issues that needs to be addressed is the inadequate medical and financial protection of our First Responders on the frontlines and in the workers compensation system.

Every day our First Responders are interacting with Texans, e.g., entering residences, performing public safety functions, or assisting the vulnerable. We have a responsibility to ensure their medical and financial protection in the instance that they come in contact with COVID-19 in the workplace and contract the virus. Medical and financial protection for First Responders can be better ensured by doing the following two things: (1) provide adequate personal protection equipment for all First Responder in Texas, and (2) ensure that First Responders that contract COVID-19 are presumed to have contracted the disease during the course and scope of their employment.

Without this presumption, which is similarly stated in Government Code 607.054, you will agree that there is virtually no argument that can prove beyond a reasonable doubt that a First Responder contracted COVID-19 in the course and scope of their employment. As a consequence, our First Responders who contract COVID-19 while on the frontlines will lose their wages and be forced to pay their own medical bills for a disease that essentially cannot be proven to be a work injury.

We must not abandon our First Responders by failing to address these issues, and I urge you to take all necessary steps to protect them. Thank you for your consideration and your genuine concern for the wellbeing of all Texans—I know you will safeguard our First Responders. If you need to contact me for additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry Canales", with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Terry Canales

