



## 6/16 Telephone Town Hall Transcript

### **Lauren Bloom:**

Good evening and welcome to the Congresswoman Porter's telephone town hall, which will provide updates on the COVID-19, talk about what Congress has done so far to provide relief and have a discussion about what more is needed. My name is Lauren Bloom and I'm Congresswoman Porter's district director. I'll be your host for tonight's event. Before we get started, please write down the following number just in case you're disconnected from the call. It is, (855) 962-1016. Again, that is, (855) 962-1016.

### **Lauren Bloom:**

Next, I want to explain the format for tonight's call. If you would like to ask the question this evening, it's very easy. Just press star three on your phone. And one of our staff will ask you your name, zip code, city and question. If you're connected through our Vekeo online streaming format, you may ask a question directly through that link.

### **Lauren Bloom:**

Because we have a very high volume of calls, we'd like to get through as many of your questions as possible. In order to do this, we ask that if you ask this question, that you please provide that question in about 15 seconds. It is now my pleasure to introduce Congresswoman Porter. Congresswoman Porter.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

Hello everyone. This is Congresswoman Katie Porter. Thanks so much for taking some time here out of the beautiful afternoon in Orange County to join me in this conversation. The last three months have presented so many challenges for our country, and challenges that I never imagined having to face. And I know I speak for many of us when I say that these weeks or these months have brought anxiety and loneliness, and sometimes grief. And that's a lot for us to bear. So I'm grateful for us to gather together as a community tonight.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

My goal for this gathering is to convey as much information as we can in the time that we have. I want to make sure that Orange County families know about all of the resources that the federal government is making available so far. And also about some of the work that we're going to be doing going forward. My staff and I are going to be choosing a range of questions to discuss during the call. But if you have a question, please go ahead and ask it.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

For any issues that we don't have a chance to get to, know that you can reach out to my office. I'm going to give this number again at the end of the town hall, but just in case anyone has to leave early, I'm going to give our office number. So if you have a pen, you can also find this number on our website that I'll give. But our office number is (949) 668-6600. We are still working remotely, but we've had that phone forwarded so that if you call, you may have to leave a voicemail, you may get a real person depending on the call volume. But know that we appreciate hearing from you.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

When you do call, it's really helpful to us, if you have to leave a voicemail, if you could give us your name, your email address, your zip code and your question. If you want an even faster response, there might already be an answer at our website, [www.porter.house.gov](http://www.porter.house.gov). We have a new COVID-19



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resources tab at the very top of that website. And there are a series of one-page resource guides, things like unemployment benefits, stimulus payments, options for student loan borrowers.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

You can also find on that COVID resources tab, broadcasts, recordings of some of the round-tables and town halls I've done. So for example, we did one on Meals on Wheels and our the options for seniors who may need meal delivery right now. We did a terrific program recently on talking to kids about the pandemic. And so know that there are resources there on our website at [porter.house.gov](http://porter.house.gov).

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

Before we get started, sort of a update from Washington. I want to stress again, that if you're feeling overwhelmed, or worried, or afraid, or all of those things, you are not alone. One of the things that we can see really clearly is that there's a surge in mental health issues. Like depression, substance-use disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder and even, tragically, suicide.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

Nearly half of Americans told the Kaiser Family Foundation, in a poll recently, that the pandemic is hurting their mental health. And a federal emergency hotline for people in emotional distress, they have seen a 1000% call increase in April of this year, in 2020, compared to that same time last year. And we're seeing the same thing with virtual and online therapy providers an organization called Talkspace, said that they have seen a 65% increase in folks seeking help with mental health issues since mid-February.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

So as we gather virtually together tonight in this town hall, please know that you are not alone. And if you or a friend needs it, I'm also going to give the number for the Orange County Crisis and Suicide Prevention hotline. You can reach this totally free resource, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That number is (877) 727-4747. Again, (877) 727-4747.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

I've been working with Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski from Alaska, right now, to pass bipartisan legislation to help fund mental health resources for those who are struggling during the pandemic. And one of the most critical functions of the federal government is providing a financial backstop. When a crisis like this overwhelms our communities, the federal government is there to help provide resources. And also make sure that that funding is being spent in a way that does the most good for the most people. Every dollar that is not spent in direct service of the American people through programs like economic impact, stimulus payments, or expanded unemployment benefits, we have to account for. And we really need to be being active watchdogs of the decisions that are being made about how our taxpayer dollars are being used.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

Congress has passed several spending bills in response to that COVID-19. One of which included \$554 million in relief funds to help Orange County with our current virus response and mitigation efforts. And those funds have now gone from the County out to the cities. And we're seeing, in our communities, cities make use of this money. And they're using it in a different ways. Some are using it to help provide more support for small business. But make sure that you're checking in with your city



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as well. Because this money went from the federal government, to the state, to the county, and is now being put out into our local communities.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

And all of that is just start, but I am fighting for more actions to ensure the wellbeing of all Orange County residents. I've been speaking with healthcare workers and with small business owners in our district, and I know how much our cities and community organizations need additional funding, to help expand testing and to continue to have ways to pay for all of the critical services that we need. So I was really proud and excited to lead a bipartisan group of our local mayors and City Council members to call on Senate and House leaders from both parties to provide more funding assistance to Orange County cities.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

In Orange County, we don't have a single city that is above half a million people, which is the initial threshold that Congress set for direct financial assistance. So I've really been pushing hard and I'm grateful to all of those local mayors and council members for being a partner in writing to Republican and democratic leadership, advocating for local funding. We value so much all of our terrific local services from our parks and recreation, to our law enforcement, to our education or schools. We want to make sure that we continue to have resources to take care of those in need in our community.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

When Congress passed the Cares Act, and then the Paycheck Protection Program and Healthcare and Cancer Act, that added funds to the Paycheck Protection Program. That, we still desperately need transparency around that program, as well as around the Economic Injury Disaster Loan, the EIDL Loan Program. And so what I've done is introduced the Paycheck Protection Program Transparency Act. It does exactly what it sounds like it would do. Which is, it would let us know who's getting this money, what the names of the businesses are, where they're located, what industries they're in, and if they're using the money to do what's intended. Which is to keep people on payroll and help keep our small businesses thriving, even as we've seen shutdowns and slowdowns in our economy.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

So it would require the Small Business Administration to publicly release these data. And this would go a long ways toward, I think, helping us assess whether this program is working as intended, as well as give taxpayers the accountability that we all deserve to know that our money is being spent wisely.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

In the last three months, we have received 26,000 calls, emails, and pieces of mail from constituents. I'm really grateful to all of those who have reached out to share their opinions, their perspectives, who have asked for help. My staff has been working to make phone calls, get in touch. I've made dozens of phone calls directly, trying to answer questions, and trying to get people assistance with a lot of the aspects of the relief. Big areas have been where are people's economic impacts stimulus checks, people needing help with the PPP. And we've been working in association with our state representative as well to, again, connect you if you have questions about state programs like Unemployment Benefits.



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### **Congresswoman Porter:**

I want to get started now with the questions and answers. Thank you very much for your patience. And I look forward to hearing from you if we send in your questions. Our first question here is from Patrick. Patrick asks, I filed for my taxes in March and still have not received my federal tax return or my stimulus checks. I was advised to reach out to my local congressperson for assistance. Is this something that you can help me with?

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

Great. Patrick, thank you for asking about this. My office can absolutely help with this. So we have a lot of requests for help with tax issues, with the IRS. And they definitely... We have a lot of folks who are having trouble locating their stimulus payment. Particularly, those who did not necessarily have direct deposit hooked up. So if you go to my website, [porter.house.gov](http://porter.house.gov), there's a section that says, help with a federal agency. And if you go there, you'll be asked to fill out a privacy release form.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

And what that form does is it lets my staff reach out. In this case, to the IRS on your behalf. Once you fill out that privacy release form, then my staff will reach out to the IRS, will try to find out what's going on, why you haven't gotten your refund, why you haven't gotten your economic impact stimulus payment. And we will reach back out with you by phone or email, let you know that the things are in process. And then we'll get back in touch with you when we get the agency's response.

### **Lauren Bloom:**

Great, thank you Congresswoman. And so we actually had a very similar question from three on our portal. And this question was from Elizabeth Herb and Bridgette. Elizabeth asks, can we force the Trump administration to be transparent revealing the benefactors of the PPP?

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

Yes. So this is exactly what the Paycheck Protection Program Transparency Act, the PPP Transparency Act would do. And so we need to pass legislation to do this. I personally wish we had baked this into the legislation right from the start, but it's not too late. We need to get these data. And we've all heard stories about various companies that are getting money, who don't need it, or people who are abusing the Paycheck Protection Program.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

I've also heard, as I've called constituents, a lot of stories about how the program's working. And it's allowing businesses to rehire their employees, to stay afloat to be ready to reopen here, as Orange County has moved into additional phases. So this Paycheck Protection Transparency Act would get us the name of the business, the location of the business, the industry that it's in, the geographic location that it's in, the amount of the loan. And so it would really allow us to see did small businesses really get the bulk of this benefit, did California or Orange County, get its fair share of PPP assistance?

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

So I'm very excited I already have 20 co-sponsors on the bill. Actually 21. I just talked to one of my colleagues today, and she's going to be joining me on the bill. So we absolutely need to have that. And one the particular reasons we need it is, Secretary of the Treasury, Steve Mnuchin, was asked in his Senate hearing late last week, if you would be willing to disclose this information. And he said no. He made assertions that this information was somehow confidential or proprietary.



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**Congresswoman Porter:**

And that is simply not correct. The PPP application itself, warns people who are borrowing that some information from the application will be disclosed. And the SBA already has a policy of disclosing basic data about the loans that it makes. So, there's absolutely no reason that we can't have that needed transparency into the Paycheck Protection Program. I hope Secretary of the Treasury, Mnuchin, does the right thing and begins disclosing that information immediately. But I have my bill, the Paycheck Protection Program, PPP Transparency Act, that would force him to make those disclosures if he doesn't step up and do so voluntarily

**Lauren Bloom:**

Thank you, Congresswoman. Joe from our portal asked, is there any chance that the \$600 of unemployment insurance from the feds can be renewed? Is there another stimulus check coming?

**Congresswoman Porter:**

Yes. Thank you so much for your question about that. I hope that we are able to provide additional assistance. The House passed a bill called the Heroes Act. And the Heroes Act would provide additional funding for unemployment insurance. So it would extend those benefits, the extra \$600 that you mentioned. Because it recognizes that there's still a lot of businesses that cannot open safely or legally under public health orders. What would happened with the Heroes Act, it would... What it would do is extend unemployment benefits through January. So it would really give a longer safety net to those who are not yet able to go back to work, or have permanently lost their jobs, and are going to have to search for new jobs in this environment.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

Even though the Heroes Act passed the house, I voted for it, it has not yet passed the Senate. And so this past several weeks ago and the Senate has not taken it up. So I'm very eager to have the Senate come up with a similar kind of bill or pass the Heroes Act. The other part of the Heroes Act is addition to that on unemployment insurance part is that there's a lot of funding for state and local governments that are in the Heroes Act. And so that would really help the State of California and our local governments continue to provide funding for other assistance programs.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

So right now, we don't have that law passed through the Senate, but the House did step up and passed the bill. And we're very, very hopeful that the Senate will do the same.

**Lauren Bloom:**

Thank you Congresswoman. This question, it comes from Paul. Many Californians are receiving healthcare through telemedicine and remote monitoring during the COVID-19 pandemic. What are your thoughts about this? And can Congress use any of the lessons learned in this time to improve healthcare?

**Congresswoman Porter:**

Yeah. This is a really great question. Thank you so much for this. So yes, we are seeing an expansion of telemedicine as a way to keep patients in our healthcare providers safe. And there are some areas of medicine where it appears that tele-health is working particularly well. So I've heard from some of our areas, psychologists and psychiatrists, for example, that their patients are either having an easier



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time scheduling people. It's easier to do it. And the old patients aren't as likely to be late. Because they're not having to travel for appointments. And they can also talk with the whole family members.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

So if you're giving mental health services to a child, for example, and usually the dad brings the child with telehealth, the mom is often able to get on as well. Even if she has to do that from work. So, I do think we're seeing areas where telehealth is working well. Congress did... Excuse me, the Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services, CMS, did expand the way that they reimburse telehealth services. And so we... I think there's a lot of potential for us to use what we're learning here, to allow people who believe that telemedicine works better for them, either because of transportation issues, because of logistical issues, to continue doing that. And for providers to be reimbursed appropriately for that.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

There, definitely, are other kinds of things where I think it's very difficult to deliver the appropriate care via telemedicine. A great example of this is well-child checkups. So many parents understandably, rescheduled, postponed their children's well child checkups because of COVID-19. But as this pandemic continues into the future, it's going to be important for us to find ways to get those kids in so that their pediatricians can do a full medical exam and make sure everything's going okay.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

So absolutely, I think there are lessons from us about the importance of supporting telemedicine. Particularly for certain kinds of practices where it's working very, very well. And I think we need to see the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid to continue to fund telehealth services where it's working well for patients.

### **Lauren Bloom:**

Thank you, Congresswoman this question comes from Cate. My PPP money will run out on July 3rd. I received an EIDL loan. He's really wondering, will there be another round of PPP funding or another program?

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

Yes. With regard to the PPP, at this point, the program still has money available for new applicants. But at this point, I don't think there's a plan to do an additional round of funding, a second wave of funding, although I do think there are some localities who are using some of their local money to help. So one thing I encourage you to do is check with your city about what they're doing with regard to assisting small business owners, some of them have set up grant programs that are in addition to the Paycheck Protection Program.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

So remember I mentioned at the beginning of the town hall that Congress passed funding, went to the state, then came to Orange County with 554 million. The County has kept some of that money to address it's expenses during the pandemic, but then has given some of it to cities. And a lot of those cities are using the money to help support small businesses. So I'm happy to have you, if you want to reach out to our office at [porter.house.gov](http://porter.house.gov), we're happy to connect you to the local city that you live in, and see if they are doing one of these grant programs.



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**Congresswoman Porter:**

But there's the Heroes Act that I mentioned that the House passed would increase the availability of emergency grants through the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program. But I do think that you're right, we don't right now have funding in place to help businesses really go much past that July, August window. And it's time for us to be providing certainty to our businesses about what helps, what's going to be available.

**Lauren Bloom:**

Great. Thank you, Congresswoman. David asks, the COVID cases in an OCR aren't going down. He wants to know what are we going to do?

**Congresswoman Porter:**

This is a really important point to be making. And it's just a fact. COVID cases in Orange County are holding steady. If anything we see some small upticks as we open up. So it's really important for everybody to continue to heed the public health guidance. I know that we've entered phase three, which is part of the State of California's phase reopening. And with phase three that began just a few days ago on June 12th, a whole lot more businesses were able to open up. But what this means is it's really extra important that we all continue to practice the public health practices that can keep us safe.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

So please continue to wear a mask for your protection and for the protection of others. Please continue to wash your hands. Please use the hand sanitizer. Please try to limit trips out into the public, limit trips out into the store. We all understand that we have to return to some semblance of regular life. We can't stay in these strict restrictions forever, but it is really important that we continue to use those public health measures.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

One important thing to know is, all Orange County residents, whether you're having symptoms or not, are eligible to be tested for COVID-19 at one of the Orange County health lab location. There are our four locations. There's one in Buena Park, just north of us. One in Orange, which is probably the closest location for most of us in the 45th District. One in Santa Ana. And then one... If you live in South County, there's one in San Juan Capistrano.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

So, if you go to [www.ochealthinfo.com/covidtest](http://www.ochealthinfo.com/covidtest). Again, [ochealthinfo.com/covidtest](http://ochealthinfo.com/covidtest). You can learn about how you can get tested. But one of the things that we have made a lot of progress on is the availability of testing. I've been watching carefully the hospitalizations, particularly the intensive care numbers. I get a report every day on where those are. So we are seeing a small uptick in cases. But we do have more personal protective equipment available.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

So let's make sure that we're, we're using that personal protective equipment. It's easier to get things like bleach wipes and hand sanitizer in the stores. So let's all make use of it and protect ourselves and others. And we do have much more testing available now, including testing for our central workers. And so we're starting to do that testing, which is going to help us keep track, very close



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track of make sure that if we see a little blip or uptake in the cases that it's not on its way to becoming a bigger problem. Because if it does, then we need to take stronger action to protect people.

**Lauren Bloom:**

Sofia asks, will there be a second stimulus payment?

**Congresswoman Porter:**

Again, at this point we don't have any concrete information about whether there will be a second stimulus payment. So there's been a lot of discussion about it. One of the things that I am a big supporter of is an approach to helping our working families that's called the Paycheck Recovery Act. Some people refer to it as Paycheck Guarantee. This is different. This is not currently law. This would be a new approach that Congress could use.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

And what this Paycheck Recovery act would do is it would help businesses, of all sizes, if they've suffered a big revenue loss, if they're not making money because of the pandemic, even though they're open, maybe they have half the customers or their profit for 20% of what they used to be. If these companies have suffered a loss in revenue, then the federal government would step in and help that company directly fund payroll.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

So the goal here is to keep people in their existing jobs and prevent businesses from laying people off. Because I think one of the concerns I have is, we have very high unemployment right now. Some of that I think is temporary. And as businesses are able to reopen, people are being asked to return to their jobs. But there are some industries, and some sectors, and some localities where we're just going to see business closures. We've already seen 12 or 16 major public companies go bankrupt. And a lot of those jobs are not going to come back.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

So I do think there's a need for us to continue thinking about how we can best support people. I think most people want to get their paychecks. And even if they're not able to go to work right now because their employers closed, if their employers laid them off, if their employer has lost their entirety and they're looking, we do need to help those families have resources to make ends meet. But at this time, there's no current legislation that has passed the House that would provide for another set of stimulus payments that.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

Could be coming. We could take it up. But at this point, we don't have that. There are people who have proposed that legislation, but the House hasn't passed it at this time. And one of the challenges, of course, for Orange County, with regard to those stimulus economic impact payments, we've seen quite a few folks who have gotten them, but we've also heard from a number of people who are still waiting. And the other challenges, eligibility for those payments phased out depending on your income.

**Congresswoman Porter:**



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And so quite a few of our local families were not eligible for any stimulus payment, or they got a reduced stimulus payment. Because their income was above what Congress set as the limit. And of course, when Congress went to say what is the income of which we want to phase this stimulus payment out, they send an income thinking about the entire country. And we live in a very high cost of living area, housing here is very expensive and incomes are correspondingly higher. And so, that's the concern I have about any future stimulus payment, is maybe trying to set the income threshold at a little bit higher level in areas where there's a higher cost of living and incomes are higher. So that more people can get the benefit of those payments.

**Lauren Bloom:**

Thank you, Congresswoman. And just as a reminder, if you do want to ask the questions in this evening, just press star three on your phone. And one of our staff will ask you your name, zip code, city, and question. And again, the Vekeo platform is available for anyone who's connected through the streaming online platform to ask a question through that way.

**Lauren Bloom:**

Next, we're going to ask a question from Kathy, from Irvine. Kathy, you shall be live in just a moment.

**Kathy:**

Hello?

**Lauren Bloom:**

Hi Kathy? Go ahead.

**Kathy:**

Hi. My question is since the levels of virus spreading and the hospitalizations and everything don't seem to match what a lot of governments, both local and state and various parts of the country are doing, including in Orange County, what's a source that we can trust for keeping us safe.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

Yeah. Are you talking about in terms of what kind of protective acts to use or more accurate source of the data?

**Lauren Bloom:**

I believe both, Congresswoman. Kathy is no longer live.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

Okay. So let me address both of those things. One is that the state is working the hard to keep track of the cases. And really what you're watching for a lot is trendline. So I think it's very clear that we did not have enough testing in the early days. People were both got sick and lost their lives in some cases without a diagnosis or without a test. And then we know that we continue to not be capturing all of the cases, and that includes how hard it is to deal with the fact that some cases are asymptomatic. And so we don't know who to test to kind of locate those asymptomatic cases. And even though people are asymptomatic, they can still transmit COVID-19.

**Congresswoman Porter:**



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So rather than focusing, very important to try to get accurate numbers. But what's really, really helpful is watching the trendline. And so looking at what's happening day after day. You're absolutely right that in California, we have seen cases go up. At the same time, we have not yet seen a hospitalization, or intensive care unit cases go up. And that is something that I know that public health officials are watching very, very carefully. Because we want to make sure... If you think back to all that discussion we had initially about flattening the curve, about making sure that there's enough resources available, we want to make sure that we stay where we are.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

So hospitalizations and ICU admissions have been roughly flat over the last two-week period. And we are testing many more people, so we are getting fewer positive cases among those we test. But you're absolutely right that as things reopen, we are likely to see an uptick in cases, and that we really, really need to watch that trendline. And our public health officials need to keep doing that. It would, personally, in terms of how to get information and what should we be doing, I would really, really support federal government stepping up and providing us with a national testing strategy and national framework that we could use.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

What's happening right now across the country is we see different cities, different counties, different states, all doing very different things. And because we don't have probable restrictions, people are flying, people are going to two different locations, they're going to see people. Especially with summer coming and more things being open, I think it's more important than ever to have a really consistent national guidance around how many cases there are, and what kinds of thresholds for testing we ought to be doing.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

And right now what we're seeing is each state, and then ultimately each county, doing their own thing. And so I think standardization of that process would be really, really helpful in trying to protect all of us.

**Lauren Bloom:**

Thank you for responding. We have a question from Penny. Penny is curious about COVID testing. Penny, you'll be live to ask the question.

**Penny:**

Hello?

**Lauren Bloom:**

Hi, Penny.

**Penny:**

Hi. This is kind Penny Watkins. I have questions because our COVID testing, as I track on the site daily, I'm a registered nurse and a public health nurse, seems to be decreasing. And I do see the numbers continuing to go up.

**Congresswoman Porter:**



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Yep. In Orange County and across the state, the governor had set a threshold for the number of tests that he wanted to see done. There are real concerns about whether Orange County is doing an adequate amount of testing. Particularly, when you look back a month ago, six weeks ago, and you compare Orange County to San Diego County. Roughly the same size population, Orange County was doing way, way less testing.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

So I think it is really important that we continue to speak out and encourage the Orange County health authority to do more testing, to have a testing strategy in place. Not just for our skilled nursing facilities, where there's been a lot of support to make sure that we're protecting both the people who live in those facilities, as well as the people who work in them, but Orange County has been lagging and testing compared to other counties in California. And so we have been increasing testing across the state. We're over about 60,000 tests per day benchmark that Governor Newsom had set statewide. But after the Orange County level, I think it's important that we push for more testing.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

And I raised this issue on a call. A number of us, Congressman Levin and I, along with some other people, wrote a letter to the Orange County Health Agency. We pointed out to them about the gap in testing between San Diego County and Orange County, for example. We did have a briefing with the Orange County Health Agency. And one of the things that they told us is we've now made this testing available for free, regardless of whether someone has symptoms or not, at those four testing locations. I mentioned Bueno Park, Orange County, Santa Ana, Juana Capistrano.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

And one of the things they said is, it's really easy to get an appointment. There's times available. There's no way you can get an appointment the same day. And one of the things we said back to them is that seems like a problem. In other words, we ought to be doing more testing, not just offering the test, but we ought to have a testing strategy in place. And I think particularly as we think about how are we going to safely open more businesses, we need to know what is the system for testing. How are we going to be testing these essential workers. How are you going to testing people.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

Not just people with symptoms, but people who may be asymptomatic. UC Irvine is doing a systematic community study to try to understand the random sample. So you might be selected to try to understand if you have an active infection. They're also doing antibody testing to try to understand if you may have already had COVID.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

But I share with you concerns about the importance of continuing to press the Orange County Healthcare Agency to do an adequate amount of testing. I think there has been a problem with that to date. And if you look back to just about a month ago, May 11th, Orange County had done 53,000 tests. San Diego County, at that same point, as of May 11th, had done 82,000. So that's a really big gap. Riverside County, which is about one-third smaller in terms of population than Orange County, had done nearly 20,000 more tests, as of May 11th.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**



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So, we have been pushing the County to continue to expand the number of tests that it performs. It's really one of the most important tools that we have.

**Lauren Bloom:**

Thank you, Congresswoman. Brenda asks what resources are available for seniors during this time?

**Congresswoman Porter:**

Great question. So one of the things to think about with regard to assisting seniors is getting help with food assistance. Many of seniors, understandably, are concerned about going out to the grocery store. There is a risk whenever we leave our homes right now. And so the Meals on Wheels program is available to do meal delivery. Those are nutritionally balanced meals and they are free. And so, as I mentioned earlier, we have information on our website, [porter.house.gov](http://porter.house.gov). If you go down to COVID-19 Resources, that's the tab at the top, and you scroll down, you'll see a 30-minute call that I had with the leaders of the Meals on Wheels programs that cover our 45th Congressional District.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

So that's one thing to think about. An also if you're here in Orange County, but you have a loved one, a parent, or a grandparent, who maybe is in another state and they're struggling with food, know that Meals on Wheels, which is a federally-funded program, is available across the country. So that's the one thing to know about.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

Another thing I would mention is the increased ability to have your prescriptions delivered. So it's easier now to get a larger supply of prescription medicine paid for, and delivered by mail. So that's something that we have been also encouraging people to do.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

Lastly, I would remind you that each of our cities has senior services. And while some of those in-person services are being delivered in different ways, if you need help, for instance if you live in Irvine, the Community Service Department, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Senior Aging Department, reach out to them. And so, the Live Well, which is one of the Meals on Wheels programs that I mentioned, they do not just meals on wheels and nutrition assistance, but are also doing things like providing transportation for seniors to essential medical appointments like dialysis during this time. So, they can connect you to a lot of those different services here in our community.

**Lauren Bloom:**

Thank you, Congresswoman. Doreen actually has a question about testing and the cost. So I'm going to have Doreen ask her question. Doreen from Anaheim Health, you should be live.

**Doreen:**

Hi. You already answered my question. I was wondering that those four sites, two things, whether you had to have symptoms and what the cost was. And I believe you already answered. So I'm going to let you answer somebody else's question. Thank you.

**Congresswoman Porter:**



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Yeah. And one thing I do want to mention is, for those of you who may have had a test earlier, we are hearing some reports that some people are getting bills for coronavirus testing. That should not be happening. So I encourage, you if you've received a bill from your insurance company or your provider, for either the visit or the coronavirus test, that you should call your insurance company and you should appeal that claim. Because we provided in the Family's First Act, when Congress passed that Family's First Act, we provided for free coronavirus testing.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

And just a few days, even before Congress acted, in an oversight and reform hearing, I asked the director of the CDC, Robert Redfield, to use existing law that exists for exactly this kind of situation, to make coronavirus testing free for every American. And he agreed to do it.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

So what we're seeing is, even though that is federal law, but what we're you're seeing is that some insurance companies and some providers are still sending out bills. In some cases, when people have contacted them, they said, oops, that was a mistake, we didn't have the correct code. Particularly for people who may have been tested back in March as this was just beginning. So coronavirus testing is free. Not just... You can go to the Orange County Public Health Agency that I mentioned and book an appointment there for testing.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

But even if you have symptoms and you go to your doctor's office, you go to a location at UC Irvine Health or Irvine health, any provider, your insurance should fully cover the testing. So if that has not happened, make sure you push back on your insurance company. Because the federal government is funding that, and the insurance companies need to do their part in making sure that people aren't getting stuck with a bill.

**Lauren Bloom:**

Thank you, Congresswoman. Nadine from Orange has a question around hospitals and future legislation. Nadine, you are alive.

**Nadine:**

Hi. Thank you so much Congresswoman. One of the things that's been happening is a lot of hospitals I've lost a lot of money, and some of them might go under, even small practices. I was wondering if there's going to be additional help or as the physicians, the nurses, the tax, as they're getting furloughed, or even losing their jobs, despite the fact that we're working through the whole thing?

**Congresswoman Porter:**

Yes. Thank you for asking about this. We have been pushing to make sure that hospitals that are receiving the assistance that Congress allocated are keeping people on payroll. And we of course asked back of those small businesses who got the Paycheck Protection Program. The whole point of it was to keep people on payroll. Hospitals are receiving money to help them deal with the loss of revenue from all of the procedures and electric procedures, non-pro-life-threatening emergencies that were canceled, or postponed, I should say, during the strictest part of the quarantine.

**Congresswoman Porter:**



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We are seeing some healthcare providers, particularly those owned by private equity firms, we are seeing them cutting providers, laying them off, cutting their hours. And we are seeing some health insurers actually remove providers from their networks, if those providers wouldn't agree to massive reimbursement rate reduction. So I wrote a letter to United Healthcare about exactly that. And I've introduced something called the Patients Before Profits Act. And what it would do is make sure that health insurance companies are not kicking doctors and nurses out of their networks. Because that can result in surprise bills.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

These health insurers, or some of them, are trying to take advantage of the public health emergency to renegotiate contracts. And then we're also seeing some of these healthcare workers being laid off. And so particularly with the private equity companies, they have the ability to step up and provide these resources. And that will allow the federal resources to go to our public and community-based hospitals. Many of which really are struggling to make ends meet during this time.

**Lauren Bloom:**

Thank you, Congresswoman. Andre has the question about the likelihood of federal unemployment benefits being extended past July.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

Andre?

**Lauren Bloom:**

I believe he's not on the line. I had asked that question. I apologize for that, Andre. Amoh from Laguna Woods has a question about testing. Amoh, please hold. Amoh, you should be live.

**Amoh:**

Okay. Great afternoon. And thank you for all your great work for us. And you're doing this. I was wondering, in Laguna Woods a lot elderly people live here and they don't have the ability to go to one of these locations to get their testing done if they're worried about their health. Is there anything that you can provide for them or we can help them with? Second question is, for those who are receiving disability checks, are they eligible for any of this stimulus package you guys have? Like \$12 you're giving. Are they going to get them or not? And thanks again for all your work. And what can we do for you as well? So that's another last question I have for you. Thanks for from the phone.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

Thank you very much for your questions. With regard to testing, most doctor's offices at this point have adequate supplies of access. So if you want to be tested, you can call your doctor's office, your normal doctor's office. And then I also... I think it would be a wonderful suggestion for you to make to the Orange County Health Authority to ask them to consider developing some mobile testing units. So as you said, they could come to the Laguna Woods community, we do have drive-through testing set up at several of our healthcare providers.

**Congresswoman Porter:**

So HOC and UC Irvine, for example, both have drive-through testing locations that are, that are closer to Laguna Woods than where the Orange County Healthcare Agency has set up testing. But do know



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that regular... We do have now a much bigger supply of tests. And when say test here, we're talking about the so-called PCR tests to help diagnose whether or not you have an active infection that may have symptoms, that may not have symptoms, but an active infection.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

With regard to antibody tests, which tells if you may have had the infection in the past, and your body has produced antibodies, those are becoming more widely available. They are part of the Orange County Healthcare Agencies testing program. We just had an oversight hearing. I'm on the Oversight and Reform Committee. We just had an oversight and reform hearing about this very question of these antibody tests, and how accurate they are. Because what the federal government did, what the Food and Drug Administration did, is it approved about 12 or 13 of these companies under what's called an Emergency Use Authorization.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

But the FDA has done no independent validation to make sure that these antibody tests are accurate. And again, these are the tests that tell you if you've had COVID-19 in the past, if your body has produced antibodies to it. So one of the things that I just want to emphasize to you is, even if you get tested and you are negative, or even if you get tested and it shows that you have antibodies, there are still important for everybody to assume that they could get this virus. And so you should continue to do things like wash your hands, try to eliminate unnecessary trips outside the home. All of those things.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

With regard to your question about how you could help me, what the most helpful thing that you all can do is continue to let me know what your concerns are. It really, really benefits me as your representative and my staff to hear what's going on. And so, we have been really delighted that we've been able to follow up with people who had questions about PPP loans. And we've learned that in some instances, they've got them and they're making a difference. We also follow up with people sometimes, and we hear there are still problems. And that's where we can step in and try to help with a federal agency. So that's one of the most helpful things that you can do to reach out and to engage.

### **Lauren Bloom:**

Thank you, Congresswoman. The question we'll probably be taking evening is from Carrie from Irvine. Carrie has a question about community policing. Carrie, you should be live.

### **Carrie:**

Yeah. Hey, Katie Porter. Thank you so much for representing us. My question was, just as one of the few black members of the Irvine community, do we have any future plans to help out with more community policing with maybe, not necessarily defunding police, but also using social work and other agencies to help out with situations that are unnecessarily need the police to be involved?

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

Yes. Thank you so much for your question. We are working on this at the federal level. And so I will be to Washington next week to vote on legislation that is called the Justice in Policing Act. And so, what this will do is, at the federal level, it will try to fix some of the broken pieces of our policing system and our justice system. It's not, necessarily, going to produce every kind of change that we



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need to make. The reality is that there's going to be a need for continued progress toward creating a police system that provides justice and accountability and keeps people safe.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

So the Justice and Policing Act would do several things. It would create a national database of officers who have engaged in excessive use of force. One of the challenges right now is we don't have good data about how often this happens. And so we fear being caught on video. And then people kind of understand that there's a problem. But the truth is police brutality happens day in and day out and far too often in this country. We want to make sure that if an officer has had disciplined for excessive use of force, and is actually asked to leave one particular police force, they're not able to get a job in another one without making sure that that issue has been thoroughly addressed.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

It would provide more resources for body cameras. And particularly one of the challenges the law enforcement has said with regard to body cameras is not the cameras themselves, but needing to have resources to safely store all of the footage that is taken. If you think about a police force, all of the different officers, all of the hours of footage in a single day, much less than a single year that comes about. And so that is another part of the Justice in Policing Act.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

It would also bend carotid chokehold. And so this would become illegal. And so this has federal legislation that we're going to be passing. I'll be going back, like I said, next week to vote for it. And it does appear that we have some bipartisan support in the Senate side. One of the senators is working on some legislation. And so I'm hopeful that we'll see legislation at the federal level. But it also really matters to make our voices heard at the local community level.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

And so, making sure that we're participating in letting our police officers know you know what we want to see in our police force. And one of the things I'm working on is a bill that would provide funding for mental health responders. Often, when we dispatch the police to respond to a 911 call, that may not be a criminal act, that's being called about. When we instituted 911, the goal was one place that everybody could call. But too often, when someone calls for help, and they call 911, and it's a mental health issue, for example, whose dispatch may be the police.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

And so it's to create mental health response units within police forces, as well as provide more training for police who may be dealing with people, to identify mental health issues. And then know how to de-escalate and de-engage until medical professionals can get there to help. Thank you for asking about this. We all need to be part of the solution, recognize that we value the safety of our Orange County communities, and that making sure that our police are keeping people who may be in their custody. Safe is part of having a safe community. So I really appreciate your asking about that. And thank you so much for joining us.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

I want to thank you everybody for asking so many questions and reaching out tonight. We weren't able to get to everyone, but I really value you all are contributing. If you have a question that wasn't answered, feel free to reach out to my office during normal business hours. I'm going to give that



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number again in a second. When you call, again, leave your name, email address, zip code, and then state your question or concern. It could be a question or concern about particular legislation that the House is considering. It could be a request for help with a federal agency. Whatever you need, reach out to our office.

### **Congresswoman Porter:**

That number is (949) 668-6600. And again, there's a lot of information on our website at [porter.house.gov](http://porter.house.gov). I've mentioned the COVID resources that are available there. But you can also click on services and go down to that help with a federal agency. If you're having a problem, for instance, getting your economic impact stimulus check, we're happy to try to help you track that down. You can also go there and check up on my voting record, on legislation and sponsoring and co-sponsoring. And sign up for our email newsletter to stay in touch about future events that we're going to be doing.

### **Congresswomans Porter:**

I can't say how grateful I am to be representing such amazing new people. I've been very grateful to be here in this community during this pandemic. The making trips back and forth to Washington to take votes. I'm heading back there next week to do that again. But really grateful to our community for being so thoughtful about taking care of those who were in need and being community-oriented during this time. So thank you again, everyone for joining us tonight. And look forward to talking with you again soon.