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Health Professionals Open Letter to Congressional Leaders

Supporting successful U.S.-North Korean diplomacy is a public health priority.

Senator Mitch McConnell, Senate Majority Leader
Senator John Cornyn, Senate Majority Whip
Senator Charles Schumer, Senate Minority Leader
Senator Richard Durbin, Senate Minority Whip
Representative Paul Ryan, Speaker of the House
Representative Kevin McCarthy, House Majority Leader
Representative Nancy Pelosi, House Minority Leader
Senator Bob Corker, Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Senator Robert Menendez, Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Representative Ed Royce, Chairman, House Foreign Affairs Committee
Representative Eliot Engel, Ranking Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee

June 7, 2018

Dear Congressional Leader,

We write as medical professionals responsible for protecting public health. As a member of Congress, you have immense responsibilities to prevent armed conflict from breaking out on the Korean Peninsula, which would be a public health catastrophe. Twenty-five million people on both sides of the Korean demilitarized zone, including at least 100,000 American citizens, are at risk.

Policymaking must be based upon an evidence-based understanding of the impacts of military action. In its November, 2017, report: *The North Korean Nuclear Challenge: Military Options and Issues for Congress*, the Congressional Research Service estimated that any military conflict on the Korean Peninsula would cause mass civilian casualties. And the medical consequences of any use of nuclear weapons would be catastrophic, with no adequate medical response.

Any military action that substantially raises the risk that nuclear weapons may be used by either side would thus be extremely dangerous. With that understanding in mind, it is critical that Congress re-assert its war-making authority, require Congressional approval for any military strike against North Korea, and actively support diplomacy in the region.

We welcome the recent diplomatic momentum, including the planned summit meeting between President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong Un in Singapore. If the summit does not achieve a complete resolution of this complex issue, that failure must not be an excuse to go to war. Please encourage President Trump to keep the channels for negotiation open and to be prepared to provide security assurances to North Korea. Call for the President to exercise leadership and work towards a comprehensive and permanent peace solution on the Korean Peninsula.

As a matter of public health policy, we believe Congress must act to block the path to war. Supporting successful US-North Korean diplomacy is a public health priority. *We must prevent what we cannot cure.*

Sincerely,

Sign-ons (next page)

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Sign-ons, circa June 7, 2018

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