

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 17, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave NW
Washington, DC, 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

We are deeply concerned about new guidance set forth by the Trump Administration indicating that COVID-19 hospital data will be sent to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), rather than the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and urge you to rescind it immediately.

The Trump administration has repeatedly bungled our nation's coronavirus response. As a result, our country leads the world in the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths, with almost 3.5 million cases and 136,938 deaths.¹ The country needs timely and accurate information to curve the recent spike in cases and prevent additional deaths. Further, CDC's provision of disaggregated data has allowed us to understand that people of color have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and enabled us to engage in efforts to address racial and ethnic health inequities. Yet, in the midst of a pandemic, the Administration has ordered hospitals to reroute hospital data to HHS, bypassing the CDC. The Administration claims this will streamline and improve data collection, even though the CDC is the sole agency with the expertise and objectiveness to protect the integrity of this data and provide accurate analysis. This is another unethical and irresponsible effort to hinder public access to data and remove transparency and accountability from the Administration's poor management of this pandemic.

An average of 1,000 lives have been lost each day in the United States since the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak.² Just this week, Dr. Robert Redfield, Director of the CDC, stated "the fall and the winter of 2020 and 2021 are going to be probably one of the most difficult times that we've experienced in American public health".³ At a time when so many lives are at stake we must hear more from health experts, not less. The Administration must take responsibility for

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Cases in the U.S.* (July 15, 2020). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html>.

² Scottie Andrew, *The US has 4% of the world's population but 25% of its coronavirus cases*, CNN (June 30, 2020). <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/30/health/us-coronavirus-toll-in-numbers-june-trnd/index.html>.

³ Aria Bendix, *CDC director predicts this fall and winter will be 'one of the most difficult times we've experienced in American public health'*, BUSINESS INSIDER (June 14, 2020). <https://www.businessinsider.com/cdc-director-robert-redfield-deadly-coronavirus-surge-fall-winter-2020-7>.

spreading misinformation, and engaging in poor and contradictory response efforts, that have led us to the dire situation we now face.

We will not allow health experts to be silenced. Saving lives and ensuring the well-being of all individuals should not be a political issue. The safety of our nation depends on our ability to act quickly, accurately, and responsibly. Timely and accurate data enable States, epidemiologists, and scientists to track the course of the pandemic and make informed decisions. It is time we prioritize the health, safety, and life of all individuals by fully confronting the soaring number of cases we are facing right now. The Trump Administration must put its own interests aside and put the American people first.

To this end, we urge the Trump Administration to rescind guidance to send COVID-19 hospital data to HHS and request that CDC continue to handle and report hospital data.

Sincerely,



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

Pete Aguilar
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

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