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House of Representatives  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515-6015

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February 4, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

We strongly support your recent decision to declare a public health emergency in response to the ongoing outbreak of the 2019 novel Coronavirus. According to the World Health Organization, as of February 3, China has reported more than 17,000 positive cases of coronavirus, including 361 deaths. In addition, 153 people in 23 countries have tested positive for the virus, including 11 individuals in the United States. And we know those numbers will continue to rise.

In recent days, the Administration has announced significant travel restrictions and taken the unprecedented step of invoking mandatory quarantine for individuals returning to the U.S. from China's Hubei province, as well as self-quarantine for individuals returning from other parts of China.

Furthermore, you recently notified the Committee on Appropriations of two actions the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has taken to redirect funds to ongoing emergency response activities:

- On January 25, you sent a letter notifying the Committee that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) would begin to access funds in the Infectious Diseases Rapid Response Reserve Fund ("Reserve Fund"), which was first established in the Department of Health and Human Services Appropriations Act, 2019 (P.L. 115-245). The Congress allocated \$50 million to the Reserve Fund in fiscal year 2019 and an additional \$85 million in fiscal year 2020.
- On February 2, you sent a letter notifying the Committee that you intend to use your transfer and reprogramming authority to reallocate up to \$75 million in additional funding to the CDC; up to \$52 million to the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response; and up to \$8.5 million to HHS's Office of Global Affairs.

It is clear, however, that further resources will be necessary to support an aggressive and comprehensive government-wide response to the 2019 novel Coronavirus, both domestically and internationally.

Instead of transferring funds from other important HHS activities, including NIH research and Head Start, we strongly urge the Administration to transmit a request to Congress for emergency supplemental appropriations to respond to this public health emergency. We urge the Administration to submit the emergency supplemental request no later than Monday, February 10, along with its submittal of the fiscal year 2021 President's Budget.

The request for emergency supplemental funding should include sufficient resources to cover the following activities, at a minimum:

- Surveillance, epidemiology, and laboratory capacity;
- Enhanced screening at ports of entry;
- Repatriation of U.S. nationals;
- Mandatory quarantine of travelers;
- Research, advanced development, and procurement of medical countermeasures, including vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics;
- Communications and public awareness;
- Direct assistance to state and local health departments, including through the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Cooperative Agreement and the Hospital Preparedness Program; and
- Any other activities to prevent, prepare for, or respond to the 2019 novel Coronavirus.

We also request responses to the following questions, which have already been posed to HHS in recent weeks by Committee Members or Committee staff:

- As of February 4, how much funding has HHS allocated to emergency response activities related to the 2019 novel Coronavirus? Please provide a breakdown by appropriations account.
- Given current spending plans, by what date do you expect all funds in the Infectious Diseases Rapid Response Reserve Fund to be fully expended?

We stand ready to work with you. Now is the time for Congress and the Administration to act in a bipartisan way to support prevention and response activities to protect the health and safety of the American people.

Sincerely,



Nita M. Lowey  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations



Rosa L. DeLauro  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies