

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 13, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Azar:

We write to ask that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) establish clear guidelines for state and local governments to receive federal reimbursement for costs they incur as part of the federal response to the current deadly coronavirus outbreak.

The administration has already identified military bases and health facilities near 11 major airports that can support Americans evacuated from China, including facilities in California, Hawaii, Illinois, Texas, Georgia, New York, Washington, New Jersey, Michigan, and the District of Columbia. Many state and local health departments and hospitals have helped support the transportation and quarantine efforts, and it is important they be notified of the criteria by which HHS will ask them to document and report what resources they contributed to the federal response for reimbursement.

In response to previous public health emergencies, federal funding was distributed to state and local efforts that directly supported federal activities. For example, in 2009, state and local agencies received federal funding to respond to ongoing and emerging outbreaks of H1N1 influenza in the United States. In 2014, state and local public health activities received federal funding for preparedness planning and operational readiness in response to Ebola. In 2016, states, cities, and territories received federal funding to support efforts to protect Americans from Zika and associated adverse health outcomes, including microcephaly and other serious birth defects. The current health emergency response should be no different.

We appreciate the department's coordination with state and local agencies so far to prevent a wider coronavirus outbreak in the United States. We urge that the department release guidance regarding reimbursement to state and local agencies so that they can continue to operate with the certainty that they will receive reimbursement as the crisis continues.



The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
February 13, 2020
Page 2

Thank you for your attention to this issue and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



MARK TAKANO
Member of Congress



KEN CALVERT
Member of Congress



RAUL RUIZ, M.D.
Member of Congress



JUAN VARGAS
Member of Congress



MAX ROSE
Member of Congress



DONALD M. PAYNE, JR.
Member of Congress



JOAQUIN CASTRO
Member of Congress



DEBBIE DINGELL
Member of Congress



MAXINE WATERS
Member of Congress



DAVID SCOTT
Member of Congress

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II

February 13, 2020


Page 3


JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress



WILL HURD
Member of Congress


ANDY KIM
Member of Congress


ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress


BRADLEY SCHNEIDER
Member of Congress


TULSI GABBARD
Member of Congress


ED CASE
Member of Congress