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September 9, 2020

The Honorable Robert Redfield
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30329

Dear Dr. Redfield,

I am writing to follow-up on the July 2nd Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Senate Appropriations Committee hearing on Operation Warp Speed, the Administration's effort to develop a COVID-19 vaccine. Developing the right vaccine and conducting robust clinical trials to see if it is both safe and effective takes time. Then it needs to be manufactured, distributed, and administered to potentially hundreds of millions of Americans. These are important and daunting steps, none more so than ensuring that when we have a vaccine available, it is distributed in the fastest, most equitable and competent manner.

I know that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is working tirelessly on this effort, in concert with other federal agencies and public health experts. I want to ensure that CDC has the resources necessary to distribute a vaccine in this manner and also ensure that the American public has the information to understand the process and feel safe about the recommendations our federal public health experts are making.

During the July 2nd hearing, we discussed how important an investment in properly distributing a vaccine is and I emphasized that the distribution planning must start as soon as possible. The targeted COVID-19 package Senate Republicans have introduced emphasizes the importance of CDC in the coronavirus response by providing \$3.4 billion directly to CDC and an additional \$6 billion for CDC to manage and coordinate the vaccine distribution process. I, like many in Congress and the Administration, am encouraged by the positive news on vaccine trials to date. I am optimistic that we will have a vaccine available for distribution by the end of this year or early next year. However, as I expressed to you at the hearing, there will be no larger a failure than if the government is unable to distribute a safe and effective vaccine in a timely and equitable manner. Specifically, I am concerned that CDC's ability to plan and execute a distribution strategy will be severely hindered absent agreement on another supplemental to provide the resources necessary for this effort.

Therefore, I plan to hold another hearing in mid-September to better understand the Administration's and CDC's plan on COVID-19 vaccine distribution as well as to receive an

update on overall COVID-19 response activities. Before that hearing, I would like responses to the following questions to better understand CDC's current efforts in this area:

- The COVID-19 supplemental provides \$6 billion for a comprehensive distribution of eventual coronavirus vaccines. When does a lack of additional funding delay progress on this distribution plan?
- Who within the Administration is the lead for the distribution plan and who is managing the efforts that have been started with CDC resources?
- What CDC resources have been allocated to this distribution plan to date?
- What has been done to date to plan for the distribution of a coronavirus vaccine?
- What is the criteria that will be used to determine priority for the equitable distribution of a vaccine?
 - How will this criteria take into account risk related to health disparities and health care access, underlying health conditions, racial and ethnic minorities, higher-risk occupations, geographic distribution of the virus, and vaccine hesitancy?
- What is the timeline for when CDC can successfully implement distribution and what are the critical activities that must occur to be ready?
- How will CDC communicate to the American public the importance of receiving a coronavirus vaccine?
 - How does CDC plan to engage local partners in this education and communications process?
- When will the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices release their final recommendations and how will they account for recommendations made by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine?

I appreciate you taking the time to answer these questions so we can have a robust discussion at the next hearing. In addition, to the extent that this process requires additional resources to prevent redistribution of already appropriated funding, I encourage you to make it clear to Congress what those additional resources are and when they will be needed.

It is concerning to think that future generations who did not live through the coronavirus pandemic may think of the vaccine as more problematic than the disease. I will continue to press on the issue of equitable vaccine distribution because I want to allay Americans' vaccine hesitancy. And to do this, we must provide clear, transparent answers on the steps ahead.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

With sincere regards,



Roy Blunt