



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

Peter A. DeFazio
Chairman

Katherine W. Dedrick
Staff Director

Sam Graves
Ranking Member

Paul J. Sass
Republican Staff Director

December 10, 2020

The Honorable Alex Michael Azar Jr.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dr. Robert R. Redfield, MD
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30329-4027

Dear Secretary Azar and Dr. Redfield:

More than seven months ago, we wrote to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requesting records related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the dangers posed to the cruise industry from this outbreak and how the industry, particularly the Carnival Corporation and its affiliated cruise lines, had responded to the pandemic. As part of that request we also asked for communications with other Federal agencies, state health departments and the White House's COVID-19 Economic Recovery Task Force regarding these matters.

Rather than permitting the CDC to respond to the Committee directly, we understand that our request is being handled by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) instead. To date, the CDC/HHS has provided the Committee with a single records production on July 10, 2020, five months ago, of just 180 pages of records. We would note that we have received nearly 12,000 pages of records from Carnival and the U.S. Coast Guard has provided us with eight productions of records in the same time period.

We understand that staff at CDC and HHS have been focused on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, even given these extenuating circumstances, the response from your agencies to our Committee to date has been completely unacceptable. As Members of Congress and senior Federal officials, we are all ultimately accountable to the American public. In our roles, as the Chairs of a Congressional Committee and one of its Subcommittees, we have an obligation to provide oversight of Executive Branch agencies, and we take that commitment seriously. We trust that you take your obligations to Congress seriously as well.

Months ago, our staff was told that CDC/HHS had identified an estimated 7,000 documents that were potentially responsive to our May 1, 2020, records request. Yet, as we indicated above, you have so far only provided the Committee with 180 pages of records. We would also point out that on October 13, 2020, Subcommittee Chair Maloney wrote to the CDC requesting additional COVID-19 related records regarding the CDC's "No Sail Order" and related issues. The Committee has received no update on the status of that records request that was sent nearly two months ago.

We would like a detailed explanation regarding the status of both of these records requests and an estimated timeline for their full completion. Please provide us with specific answers to the questions listed below by Wednesday, December 23, 2020, at the latest:

- How many total records (or pages of records) has CDC and HHS identified to date that are responsive (or potentially responsive) to our May 1, 2020, records request?
- Has CDC/HHS already completed its search of responsive records to the Committee or is that search still ongoing? If the search is still ongoing, when do you anticipate it being completed?
- How many records (or pages of records) have been reviewed to date?
- How many records (or pages of records) have been cleared for delivery to the Committee to date?
- Which specific office at CDC and HHS, and any office outside of HHS, has been engaged in reviewing these records for response/delivery to the Committee?
 - Please provide the name or names of the key individuals in each office involved in this review.
- The Committee originally agreed to receiving these records on a rolling basis. What is the estimated date of the next delivery of records to the Committee, and approximately how many records (or pages of records) do you expect to provide?
- What is your estimated timeline on fully completing the records production to the Committee in response to our May 1, 2020, records request?

Please answer the same exact set of questions listed above regarding the October 13, 2020, letter to CDC from Chair Maloney as well.

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This request and our understanding of the actions taken by both the Carnival Corporation and the CDC in response to the threat of COVID-19 on cruise ships will help enhance the safety of the public. We appreciate your attention to this matter. If you have any questions regarding this request, please have your staff contact Douglas Pasternak of the Majority Staff at (202) 226-1871 or via e-mail at doug.pasternak@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



PETER A. DeFAZIO
Chair



SEAN PATRICK MALONEY
Chair
Subcommittee on Coast Guard
and Maritime Transportation

Enclosures: May 1, 2020 Letter from Chairs DeFazio and Maloney to CDC Director
October 13, 2020 Letter from Subcommittee Chair Maloney to CDC Director

cc: The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member

The Honorable Bob Gibbs, Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation