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COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

October 4, 2019

The Honorable Dr. Robert R. Redfield
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Rd
Atlanta, Georgia 30329

Dear Dr. Redfield,

This summer, a group of doctors brought to my attention the threat of infectious diseases inside detention centers that house children who have crossed the U.S. Southern border.¹ Based on an analysis of autopsies, it revealed that influenza was a cause of death of at least three children. Customs and Border Patrol, however, has apparently taken the position that the agency would not be offering influenza vaccines to detainees or requiring vaccination for staff for the 2019-2020 flu season.²

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the nation's leading agency on infection control, supports vaccination against influenza. Your agency has determined that "flu vaccination can significantly reduce a child's risk of dying from influenza"³ and has estimated that in 2016-2017, "flu vaccinations prevented an estimated 5.3 million influenza illnesses, 2.6 million influenza-associated medical visits, and 85,000 influenza-associated hospitalizations."⁴

You have also personally encouraged vaccination in detention centers. In a recent interview after a Research American forum, you were asked if you advised the Customs and Border Patrol to

¹ Letter to the Honorable Rosa DeLauro and the Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard. 1 August 2019. https://beta.washingtonpost.com/immigration/doctors-urge-probe-of-child-migrant-deaths-poor-conditions-at-border-increase-risk-of-spreading-flu/2019/08/01/0bf86b06-b445-11e9-8f6c-7828e68cb15f_story.html.

² Cohen E. Bonifield C. CBP will not vaccinate migrants against flu. CNN. 20 August 2019. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/20/health/cbp-migrant-vaccinations-bn/index.html>.

³ CDC. Vaccine effectiveness: How well do the flu vaccines work? 12 October 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/vaccines-work/vaccineeffect.htm>

⁴ CDC. 2016-2017 estimated influenza illnesses, medical visits, and hospitalizations averted by vaccination in the United States. 2 April 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/vaccines-work/burden-averted-2016-17.htm>.

give flu shots to detainees. You responded, “We don’t tell them exactly how they need to operationalize it. We do believe that vaccination—particularly as early as possible—is a recommendation.”⁵ You also stated that “as soon as we can get individuals—all individuals, whether they’re citizens in our nation or whether they’re migrants— to get the flu vaccination is something we do recommend.”⁶

I respect your commitment to providing care based on evidence in all settings. Please answer the following questions.

1. Since January 1, has Customs and Border Patrol consulted with CDC related to the deaths of children in detention centers? If so, please explain the nature of the consultation and provide copies of all documentation shared between the agencies, including email messages.
2. Since January 1, has Customs and Border Patrol asked CDC for guidance about vaccination of people who are migrating as well as vaccination of staff? If so, please explain the nature of the consultation and the guidance provided by the CDC. Please include consultation on flu vaccines as well as other vaccination questions, such as the mumps vaccine. Please provide copies of all documentation between the agencies, including email messages.
3. Since January 1, have you communicated with leadership at HHS or the White House about the issue of vaccination by Customs of Border Patrol, either of people migrating or staff? If so, please provide copies of such communications, including email messages.

If you have further questions about our request, please contact Caitlin Peruccio in my office at 202-225-3661 I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress

⁵ <https://twitter.com/MedResJourno/status/1169615426965430272?s=20>

⁶ <https://twitter.com/MedResJourno/status/1169615711075016704?s=20>