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ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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November 29, 2023

Dr. Mandy K. Cohen, MD, MPH
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Director Cohen,

We write regarding the reports from China of increased respiratory diseases and pneumonia clusters in children.

The Centers for Disease Control and Protection's (CDC) failure to communicate accurate information in real-time during the COVID-19 pandemic has undermined public trust in the agency. If the CDC is to regain credibility with the American people, it must be transparent and forthcoming with the information it has on public health threats facing our nation.

It is widely known that China thwarted international efforts, including efforts by the CDC, to respond to the burgeoning COVID-19 crisis as it began to unfold in China.^{1, 2} Even the World Health Organization (WHO), which has long been criticized for being overly accommodating to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), has called China's decision to withhold information from the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic "simply inexcusable."³

The WHO has now called on China to provide epidemiologic and clinical information, as well as laboratory results, on the reported pneumonia clusters among children, in addition to

¹ NBC News, *How China blocked WHO and Chinese scientists early in coronavirus outbreak*, (June 2, 2020); <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/how-china-blocked-who-chinese-scientists-early-coronavirus-outbreak-n1222246>

² James Bandler et al, *Inside the Fall of the CDC*, ProPublica (Oct. 15, 2020); <https://www.propublica.org/article/inside-the-fall-of-the-cdc>

³ Maria D. Van Kerkhove, *Share all SARS-CoV-2 data immediately*, Science (Apr. 6, 2023); https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.adi0490?adobe_mc=MC MID%3D6779604793358260222639539861206899693%7CMCORGID%3D242B6472541199F70A4C98A6%2540AdobeOrg%7CTS%3D1680802785

information on recent trends of known pathogen circulation.⁴ It would be an abdication of the CDC's duty to the American people if it allows China to repeat its misdeeds from the COVID-19 pandemic. The American people should not have to rely on the unaccountable and untrustworthy WHO to communicate information about Chinese public health threats. Further, we cannot allow the CCP to block the CDC from accessing the information it needs to protect Americans and assist in appropriate public health response efforts.

To that end, please provide answers to the following questions by December 13, 2023. A response in narrative form that does not address each individual question is unacceptable.

1. Has the CDC engaged with or interacted with its Chinese counterparts with respect to the increased incidence of respiratory diseases and undiagnosed pneumonia?
2. If yes, when did the CDC and its Chinese counterparts first interact with respect to the increased incidence of respiratory diseases and undiagnosed pneumonia? Who initiated this interaction?
3. At any point did the CDC's Chinese counterparts withhold information or fail to respond to the CDC in a timely manner with respect to the increased incidence of respiratory diseases and undiagnosed pneumonia? Please detail each instance and the topic of inquiry that prompted such failure to respond in a timely manner.
4. What specific information, if any, has the CDC sought from China with respect to the increased incidence of respiratory diseases and undiagnosed pneumonia?
5. What specific information, if any, has the CDC received from China with respect to the increased incidence of respiratory diseases and undiagnosed pneumonia? Please detail the length of time it took China to respond to each inquiry for information.
6. What specific response efforts, if any, has the CDC offered to take part in with respect to the increased incidence of respiratory diseases and undiagnosed pneumonia?
7. What specific response efforts, if any, has the CDC taken part in, is actively taking part in, or plans to take part in with respect to the increased incidence of respiratory diseases and undiagnosed pneumonia?
8. Has specific information on the outbreak been communicated to relevant federal agencies and/or key stakeholders, including:
 - a. The Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR);

⁴ World Health Organization, *WHO statement on reported clusters of respiratory illness in children in northern China*, (Nov. 22, 2023); <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-11-2023-who-statement-on-reported-clusters-of-respiratory-illness-in-children-in-northern-china>

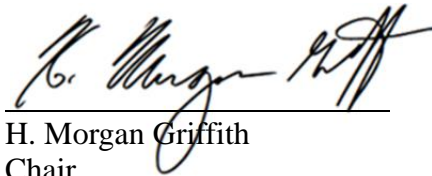
- b. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA);
- c. The National Institutes of Health (NIH);
- d. The Office of the Surgeon General (OSG);
- e. The Department of Defense (DOD);
- f. Other Federal entities; and/or
- g. State and local public health officials

Additionally, we request the CDC make itself available to brief Committee staff on this issue on at least a biweekly basis until further notice. Please contact Molly Brimmer and John Strom with the majority staff of the Committee with any questions.

Sincerely,



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Chair
Committee on Energy and
Commerce



H. Morgan Griffith
Chair
Subcommittee on Oversight and
Investigations



Brett Guthrie
Chair
Subcommittee on Health

CC: Frank Pallone Jr., Ranking Member, Energy and Commerce Committee
Anna Eshoo, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Health
Kathy Castor, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations