

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 13, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Azar:

We write to ask that your department 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 the department will ask them to document and report what resources they contributed to the federal response for reimbursement.

In addition, the administration has provided guidance and expectation that state and local public health agencies conduct monitoring of travelers who are in self-quarantine. As this response continues, existing resources will be exhausted and federal support will be needed to continue efforts.

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 expeditiously regarding reimbursement to state and local agencies so that they have certainty that they will receive sufficient reimbursement as the crisis continues.

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

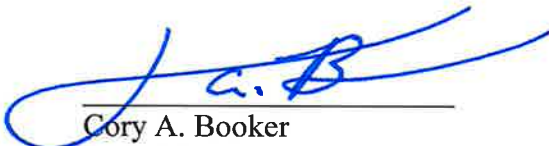
Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



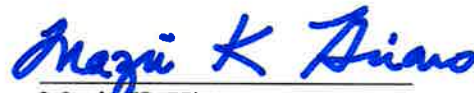
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



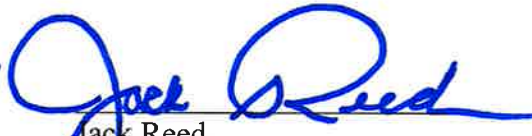
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



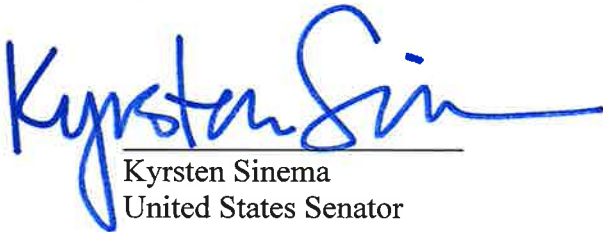
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
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Martha McSally
United States Senator

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Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator