

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 14, 2007

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

Dear Secretary Leavitt:

We are very concerned that the Department of Health and Human Services has terminated the Request for Contracts to start a World Trade Center (WTC) Business Processing Center which would, among other tasks, administer the WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program for responders who live outside the New York metropolitan area.

Over six years after the attacks of 9/11, the health needs of all those who were exposed to the toxins of Ground Zero are still not being met. A series of grants set up the WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment program to provide care for WTC rescue, recovery and cleanup workers in the New York metropolitan area. However, there is still no comprehensive federal program to care for the thousands of people currently living outside the metropolitan region who were exposed to the toxins of Ground Zero. These are people who came from every state in the nation and nearly every Congressional District in our country to help with the recovery efforts. In addition, a national program would serve those responders who were residents of the New York metropolitan area on 9/11, but have since moved or retired to other areas.

The purpose of putting forth the Request for Contracts for the Business Process Center was to establish a coordinated, systematic mechanism for the treatment of these responders before existing funding streams for national treatment ends, which is expected to happen at some point next year. Without this Request, the process of establishing federally funded treatment opportunities for responders outside of the New York metropolitan area has been halted, and the process of transitioning from existing treatment to a coordinated program has ended. Canceling the request for contracts essentially puts an end to the hope that they can access the care they need on a long-term basis in their area, without having to travel to New York.

We have all been strong advocates for the treatment and monitoring programs that help those that responded to 9/11 get the essential care and treatment for the lingering health impacts resulting from the exposures they faced in their work. But we also strongly believe that access to this care should not be based upon where you live. Responders and rescue workers came from all over the nation to address the crisis faced in New York, and we should in turn make sure that treatment services are available in locations across the nation. As a result, we are surprised and disheartened that HHS summarily stopped

the contracting process for a WTC Business Processing Center, particularly because of the effort that had been carried out on this issue by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

In addition to establishing a mechanism for treatment, it is important to note that the Business Processing Center would allow data on injuries and costs to be compiled in a timelier manner. Such center would also help to coordinate data collection among entities receiving federal funding for 9/11 monitoring and treatment.

With this in mind, we respectfully request to know:

- 1) Why did HHS cancel the Request for Contracts for the WTC Business Processing Center?
- 2) Who made the decision and who is ultimately responsible for the decision?
- 3) When will a new request be issued?
- 4) If you do not plan to issue a new request, why not?
- 5) What alternatives do you plan in order to deliver the services these responders need across the country?
- 6) Generally, what are the changes you are contemplating for the WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment program for WTC responders?
- 7) Specifically, how do you intend to collect and improve the data that lawmakers need in order to move forward with caring for WTC Responders, both in New York and around the country?

Because of the urgency of this matter, we would like a response before Friday, December 21 at 5:00pm.

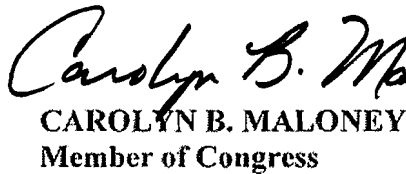
Sincerely,



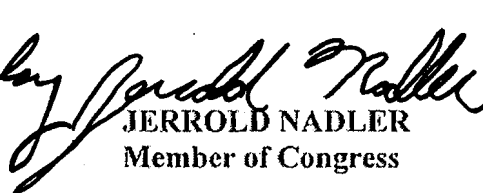
CHARLES E. SCHUMER
United States Senator



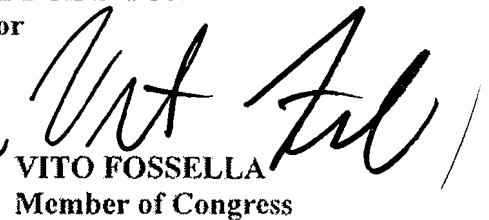
HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
United States Senator



CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress



JERROLD NADLER
Member of Congress



VITO FOSSELLA
Member of Congress