

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 30, 2014

Secretary Sylvia Burwell
U.S. Department of Health & Humans Services
200 Independence Avenue Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Burwell:

In the past month, the American people have watched the Ebola virus spread from an outbreak in West Africa to a contagion in our state of Texas. Further unchecked transmission of Ebola is simply unacceptable, and the government's response has raised concerns given how it has made use of existing resources.

Just last year, Congress passed and President Obama signed the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Reauthorization Act of 2013 (PAHPRA), building on the original Act of 2006, which added to existing public health infrastructure within the eight U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) agencies that comprise the Public Health Service (PHS). Yet despite these measures, which granted targeted, enhanced authorities to HHS and authorized billions of dollars for HHS to plan for and respond to public health crises like this one, mistakes have still been made that resulted in new Ebola diagnoses on U.S. soil.

In fact, of the \$10.8 billion the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates it spent in FY 2014, almost \$1.4 billion went to "Public Health Preparedness and Response" activities. Among these activities is a Cities Readiness Initiative to "support local medical countermeasure distribution and dispensing planning in the nation's 72 largest metropolitan statistical areas (MSA)." Since Dallas is one of the cities in this initiative, and ground zero for the first U.S. Ebola case, it is especially troubling to witness the federal government's communication missteps and confusion about protocols knowing that a wide range of federal resources have already been in place for years.

We know from the CDC that since 2002, a Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) cooperative agreement "has provided nearly \$9 billion to public health departments across the nation to upgrade their ability to effectively respond to a range of public health threats, including infectious diseases." Yet a March 2013 Government Accountability Office report on the effectiveness of this arrangement noted that it lacked consistent performance measures and associated targets, undermining CDC's ability to assess how and whether recipients of these funds were making any progress toward the PHEP's goal.

As the brave health professionals directly involved with the treatment of this virus do

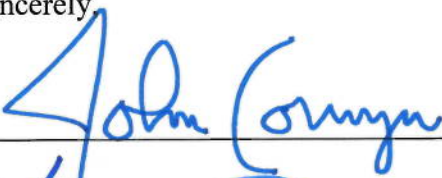
their part, we must understand how years spent developing strategic plans and applying these significant resources failed to adequately prepare for dealing with Ebola after it was first discovered here. Before contemplating any additional course of action, we need a better understanding of how your Department has utilized the tools it's already been given.

We therefore request detailed answers to the following inquiries:

1. Please identify all strategic plans, policies, and protocols developed under the authorities of the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Acts involved in the treatment and containment of the current Ebola crisis, along with a description of how these procedures are being implemented.
2. Please provide an accounting of the role and steps taken by the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, a position created by the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act of 2006, involved in the treatment and containment of the current Ebola crisis.
3. Please provide an accounting of how all your Department's Public Health Preparedness and Response activities, such as the State and Local Preparedness and Response Capability and the CDC Preparedness and Response Capability, were utilized in preparation for and in response to Ebola cases in the United States.
4. Please provide any distinction between the role and responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response and those of the recently appointed "Ebola Czar," Ron Klain, involved in the response to the current Ebola crisis, including containment efforts.
5. Please identify any additional authorities and programs being used by the Department involved in the treatment and containment of the current Ebola crisis.

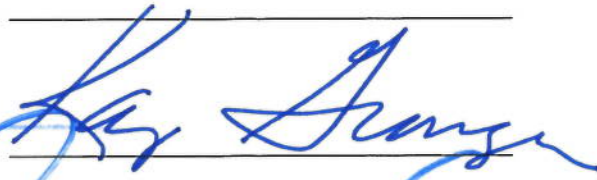
We look forward to your prompt responses on this critical matter.

Sincerely,



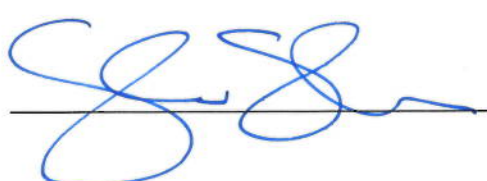


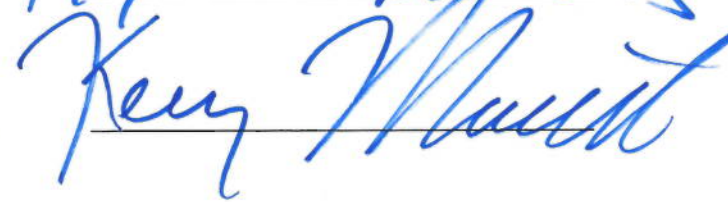












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