February 25, 2022

Dr. Rochelle Walensky  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
395 E Street S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Dr. Walensky:

House Oversight and Reform Committee Republicans and Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis Republicans are conducting oversight of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) decision to withhold vital data and information about COVID-19. According to the New York Times, the CDC failed to publish essential information about COVID-19 hospitalizations, at least in part, to control the narrative around vaccine effectiveness.\(^1\) States and localities could have used the withheld data to better inform their efforts to mitigate the virus’ spread in their area. The decision to hide data from the public prevented a more targeted response, likely costing lives and causing unnecessary economic harm. This failure to be transparent further erodes the public’s trust in the CDC.

CDC spokeswoman Kristen Nordlund stated that the agency has been slow to release the data they routinely collected because “basically, at the end of the day, it’s not yet ready for prime time” and they feared the information might be misinterpreted.\(^2\) She confirmed one of the main concerns with releasing breakthrough infection information is it may be misinterpreted as the vaccines being ineffective.\(^3\)

Reports indicate that the CDC has, in fact, collected data on vaccine and booster shot effectiveness, breakthrough infections, and wastewater analysis but has delayed its release, released only small portions of the data or none at all. The CDC also blamed outdated systems for their inability to release data.\(^4\) The CDC received more than $1 billion to modernize their systems yet the agency continues to fail to produce timely, robust, or accurate data. Further, the CDC has received over $23 billion in supplemental funding to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19.\(^5\) There is no reason for the CDC to withhold or release critical data in a piecemeal fashion.

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\(^2\) Id.
\(^3\) Id.
\(^4\) Id.
\(^5\) *Budget*, CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION (last visited Feb. 22, 2022).
This withheld information is critical to ushering in our post-pandemic normal. Detailed data enables better decision-making. For instance, wastewater surveillance nationwide would spot outbreaks and emerging variants; booster shot effectiveness data would inform who should receive booster shots; and tracking breakthrough infections would allow Americans to make their own informed risk analysis. The American people deserve transparency and accountability. The New York Times new report adds to the existing skepticism and public distrust of much of the CDC’s current COVID-19 guidance. As part of your ongoing efforts to return credibility to the CDC, Republicans request that you produce to the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis and the Oversight and Reform Committee all information collected over the course of the last 12 months of the pandemic by March 11, 2022.

Sincerely,

Steve J. Scalise
Ranking Member
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis

James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform

Andy Biggs
Member of Congress

Andrew S. Clyde
Member of Congress

Michael Cloud
Member of Congress

Byron Donalds
Member of Congress

Pat Fallon
Member of Congress

Virginia Foxx
Member of Congress

Scott Franklin
Member of Congress

Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress
cc: The Honorable James E. Clyburn, Chairman
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
Committee on Oversight and Reform