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3<sup>RD</sup> DISTRICT, KANSAS  
  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
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July 23, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

I write to you with deep concern over recent guidance from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) instructing hospitals to send COVID-19 data directly to HHS rather than the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). I strongly urge you to heed the widespread concerns of public health officials and experts across the country and reconsider this guidance.

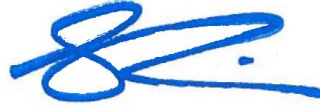
Cases of COVID-19 are rising dramatically across the country, including in the Kansas Third District, which I represent. State, tribal, and local public health departments need timely and accurate information to direct their efforts to prevent spikes in infection and prevent further deaths, and they rely on data that the CDC collects and publishes. I have heard from public health experts in my district who are extremely worried about this abrupt change in policy and the impact it will have on public COVID-19 data.

The ability of our nation to overcome this pandemic rests on the communication, collaboration, and trust between state, tribal, and local public health officials and the federal government. Despite some missteps in responding to this pandemic, the CDC is the trusted agency with the expertise and objectivity to protect the integrity of this data and provide accurate analysis. This abrupt change has come with little announcement preparing public health officials who interact with and depend on this information. I strongly urge you to publicize your plans for ensuring that the same data the CDC reported publicly continues to be made public and easily accessible.

While I support the modernizing of data collection to reduce strain on hospitals and improve the dissemination of that information, the importance of transparency and availability of the state of our health system during this pandemic is paramount. I strongly encourage you to listen to the concerns of public health experts and state officials who have protested this change, especially its abrupt nature with little time for preparation. We must do all we can to fully inform and equip scientists, epidemiologists, and public health officials with the timely and accurate data they need

to track and counter the spread of the virus. Our nation's recovery from this pandemic depends on it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Davids', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rep. Sharice L. Davids  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS