

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 17, 2018

Robert R. Redfield, MD
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Director Redfield:

We write to express concern regarding an increase in cases of acute flaccid myelitis (AFM) across the country and to obtain information on how the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in coordination with local and state health departments, is working to address this very concerning trend.

While CDC classifies AFM as a very rare condition,¹ we are concerned by the number of cases identified this year. For example, in our home state of Washington, there are currently seven suspected cases.² As of October 16, 2018, CDC had confirmed 62 cases of AFM in 22 states nationwide, already surpassing last year's total number of cases but not yet reaching the total number of cases from 2016, which also saw a concerning spike in AFM cases.³ These reports are particularly alarming since the majority of suspected cases are children. Harrowing accounts of sudden limb paralysis, including among very young children, have puzzled physicians and placed public health officials on high alert.⁴ CDC estimates that fewer than one in a million people are diagnosed with AFM every year, and experts have been unable to identify specific causes of the disease.⁵

We appreciate the steps CDC has taken to respond to AFM, and we urge the agency to act swiftly to protect families, stop the spread of disease, and ease the growing public concern. In order to understand the agency's strategy to address AFM, we request your response to the following questions:

¹ National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, Division of Viral Diseases. (2018, October 12). AFM Investigation. Retrieved October 15, 2018, from <https://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/afm-surveillance.html>

² Washington State Department of Health. (n.d.). Acute flaccid myelitis (AFM). Retrieved October 16, 2018, from <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/AFM>

³ Clarridge, C. (2018, October 10). Five children in Washington state stricken with limb paralysis; health officials investigating. Retrieved October 15, 2018, from https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/five-children-in-washington-state-stricken-with-limb-paralysis-health-officials-investigating/?utm_source=referral&utm_medium=mobile-app&utm_campaign=ios

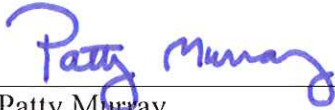
⁴ Crowe, M. (2018, October 12). Seattle mom describes baby's sudden paralysis. Retrieved October 15, 2018, from <https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle-mom-describes-babys-sudden-paralysis/281-603582005>

⁵ National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, Division of Viral Diseases. (2018, April 02). Acute Flaccid Myelitis. Retrieved October 15, 2018, from <https://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/about-afm.html>

1. What research is in progress or planned at the agency in regard to the etiology and potential treatment of AFM? Please describe any preliminary findings.
2. How is CDC educating providers and informing the public of this growing public health crisis?
3. How is CDC working with local and state health departments with regards to AFM, including to ensure that all potential cases of AFM are being reported?
4. What other efforts is the agency undertaking to address the rising number of AFM cases?

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We respectfully request you provide a briefing to our staff to address these questions by no later than October 24, 2018.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator