

January 3, 2022

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,

We write today with great concern about the Department of Health and Human Services' long-term strategy for COVID-19 testing. In 2020, Congress passed five bipartisan appropriations bills that included \$34.8 billion in funding for the Department for testing related activities. In 2021, the administration pushed through a partisan reconciliation package that included an additional \$47.8 billion for testing. Yet today our country faces a testing shortage, with long lines to obtain a PCR test, and empty shelves for Americans seeking to purchase rapid tests.

With over \$82.6 billion specifically appropriated for testing, and flexibility within the Department to allocate additional funds from COVID-19 supplemental bills or annual appropriations if necessary, it is unclear to us why we are facing such dire circumstances now. It does not appear to be because of lack of funding, but a more fundamental lack of strategy and a failure to anticipate future testing needs by the administration. Therefore, we request answers to the following questions below:

1. Of the total funding provided to the Department for testing activities, how much funding remains unobligated?
 - a. Of the unobligated funding, how much of that funding remains unplanned for?
 - b. If funding is unobligated, but the Department has a future purpose for it, please specify the future purpose and estimated date of obligation.
2. Did the Department use any of the testing funding for other activities?
 - a. If so, for what activities and how much funding was allocated?
3. Did the Department allocate any funding from any other appropriations for testing activities?
 - a. If so, what was the source of funding, for what activities, release date of funding, and how much funding was allocated?
4. On December 21, 2021, the White House announced it would purchase 500 million rapid tests and distribute them for free to any American that wanted them. How was the number of rapid tests to be purchased determined?
 - a. How much will this activity cost?
 - b. Where will the funding come from? Please list by bill and activity.

- c. When is it expected that the administration will have tests in hand and ready to distribute?
- d. Will there be limitations on the number of tests each household can request?
- e. Given that the U.S. population is currently 329.5 million people, the Department will purchase approximately 1.5 tests per person. How long does the Department expect these tests to be available?
- f. Were additional tests, beyond the 500 million announced, available for procurement?
 - i. If yes, why did the administration choose not to purchase these additional tests?
 - ii. If no, how is the administration working with manufacturers to help them establish, or reestablish, capacity to manufacture additional tests?
 - iii. What impact will these contracts have on commercially available tests?
5. The COVID-19 supplemental bills passed in 2020 provided a broad authority for use of activities for funds allocated for “testing,” including use for research, development, and purchase of COVID-19 tests. Further, the American Rescue Plan provided funding for testing with virtually no limitations on the use of funds. Please provide a chart, with funding broken out by bill, for how the testing funds were allocated.
6. In addition to the funding that has been obligated by the Department for testing activities, how much funding has been provided to the states through COVID-19 supplemental appropriations and the American Rescue Plan’s testing funding?
 - a. How much of the funding for states still remains unspent?
 - b. Please provide a chart with allocations, obligations, and planned funding by state.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter. As we continue to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that Congress, and the American people, have an understanding of the administration’s strategy and accounting of how the Department is using taxpayer funding.

Sincerely,



Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee



Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health,
Education, Labor & Pensions