

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 16, 2014

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC
WORKS
INDIAN AFFAIRS
SMALL BUSINESS AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Dr. Tom Frieden
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027

Dear Dr. Frieden:

There is growing concern in Nebraska and across the country about the threat of Ebola in the United States. While I am proud of the excellent care the University of Nebraska Medical Center has provided two Ebola patients, there are still questions about how the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal partners are responding. One specific concern is that the CDC's approach has been reactionary while failing to keep pace with the changing circumstances of the domestic outbreak. In an effort to better understand CDC's decision-making process and to ensure proper steps are being taken to protect public health, I respectfully request responses to the following questions:

- You recently stated that the CDC must rethink how it handles Ebola infection control and you made a commitment to ensure that lessons learned are applied to all hospitals across the country. What specifically is the CDC doing to change its Ebola response from being reactionary to proactive? How can it better anticipate the next steps we need to take to prevent the spread of the virus?
- Recent reports from National Nurses Union suggest that the Dallas nurses assigned to treat Thomas Eric Duncan were not given proper training or proper personal protective equipment. How is the CDC clearly and effectively communicating treatment and containment procedures to every health care facility that might treat a potential Ebola patient? How is the CDC ensuring health care facilities have the equipment they need to inspect and treat people safely?
- Americans have been told that any hospital can treat a patient with Ebola, yet the CDC recently announced it will be sending special teams to deal with future cases. Does the CDC have the capacity to provide that kind of in-person support to facilities? Why were those teams not deployed earlier?
- Given the incubation period for the Ebola virus, what level of protection does enhanced screening at ports of entry provide? What additional advanced screening measures are the Administration considering?

- How does the government plan on tracing and notifying citizens who have been on domestic flights or at domestic airports with people confirmed to have contracted Ebola? Have all the passengers of the recent Frontier Airlines flight, which transported a Dallas nurse with Ebola, received notification? Does the CDC plan to test those Frontier Airline passengers for the virus?
- What travel guidance is the government providing to health care workers who are directly treating Ebola patients? Does the government have a plan in place to quickly notify those who come into contact with others confirmed to be infected with the Ebola virus?
- The CDC and the Administration have repeatedly opposed flight restrictions to foreign countries in West Africa arguing that such restrictions would make it harder to respond to the source of the virus, creating an even greater humanitarian and health care emergency. Specifically, the Administration contends that a travel ban would restrict the movement of medical supplies and aid workers to impacted areas. Is it possible to impose a ban on unnecessary travel while at the same time enacting processes that permit the flow of aid and healthcare workers to the region? Please explain your argument in more detail and explain the circumstances under which the Administration would potentially consider travel restrictions from virus hot zone locations.

The federal government must be vigilant in evaluating all options to help identify, better manage, and actively fight the spread of Ebola. We need to be better prepared. We need better coordination and leadership that ends the current pattern of being one step behind this public health crisis. The American people expect this Administration to address the challenges we face with Ebola at home and abroad, and I hope the CDC will demonstrate that stronger leadership in preventing any future cases of the virus.

Sincerely,



Deb Fischer
United States Senator