

BLAINE LUETKEMEYER

MEMBER OF CONGRESS
3RD DISTRICT, MISSOURI

<http://luetkemeyer.house.gov/>

www.facebook.com/BlaineLuetkemeyer

www.twitter.com/RepBlaine

www.instagram.com/RepBlaine

COMMITTEE ON
FINANCIAL SERVICES
CONSUMER PROTECTION
AND FINANCIAL
INSTITUTIONS
RANKING MEMBER

HOUSING, COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT AND
INSURANCE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

August 5, 2020

Admiral Brett Giroir, M.D.
Assistant Secretary for Health
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 716-G
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Admiral Giroir,

Thank you for your service to our country and all you and your team have been doing to help the United States battle the coronavirus pandemic. Your recent testimony at two Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis hearings have been invaluable and I remain confident that our country is in good hands under the leadership of President Trump and his team.

As you know, hospitals receive a greater reimbursement from Medicare for any patient on a ventilator and receiving intensive services. However, this reimbursement doesn't change whether the care is for pneumonia or COVID-19. Under the CARES Act, an additional 20% was added to the reimbursement amount for all COVID-19 related services. I am concerned that this has provided a perverse incentive for hospitals to code a patient's death being due to COVID-19, even if it was not the ultimate cause.

There have been numerous reports from states such as Colorado, Pennsylvania and Texas that show states now reclassifying their COVID-19 death count to lower levels due to misreporting. When I asked you about this during the July 2 Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis hearing, you acknowledged there appear to be some "mis-incentives" to over code and you have heard anecdotal evidence of this.

During that same hearing, you also stated the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the agency gathering death statistics from the state and local level. However, on July 16, 2020 it was announced hospitals will begin reporting to Tele-Tracking Technologies, Inc. and not the CDC. With this new reporting system, does the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have proper oversight over the data collection? Are there measures in place since this announcement to ensure state and local officials are correctly reporting COVID-19 deaths so federal taxpayer dollars are not inaccurately spent on deaths that are being misreported as COVID-19? If not, does HHS plan to implement such measures in the immediate future?

Thank you for your attention and prompt reply to this issue. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Meghan Schmidlein in my office at Meghan.Schmidlein@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress

