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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

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COMMITTEE ON
FINANCIAL SERVICES

CONSUMER PROTECTION
AND FINANCIAL
INSTITUTIONS
RANKING MEMBER

HOUSING, COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT AND
INSURANCE

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

Dear Dr. Redfield,

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 the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis hearing has 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.

As I expressed during the July 31, 2020 Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis hearing, I am concerned this has provided a perverse incentive for hospitals to code a patient's death due to COVID-19, even if it was not the ultimate cause of death. You acknowledged during the hearing this was seen during the HIV epidemic. As it relates to misreported COVID deaths by state and local officials, you stated "hospital reimbursement issues or individuals that get discharged, there could be some play in that for sure."

While it was announced on July 16 that Tele-Tracking Technologies, Inc. will now be collecting COVID-related death data from state and local officials, I would like to know if the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has any oversight over this 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 the CDC 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 Schmidtlein in my office at Meghan.Schmidtlein@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress