

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 12, 2022

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James E. Clyburn
Chairman
Select Subcommittee on the
Coronavirus Crisis
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Maloney and Chairman Clyburn:

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a deeply flawed agency. Throughout the pandemic, the CDC has at times acted as an ivory tower academic institution refusing to follow the science, provide practical and current guidance during an unprecedented health crisis, or gather and share sound data with the American people. These are only a few examples of the agency's failures over the past two years. CDC bureaucrats have published confusing guidance,¹ acted outside their legal authority,² undermined efforts to reopen schools,³ and shockingly allowed political organizations to edit official guidance.⁴ Recent reporting regarding alleged data mining and tracking of Americans' cell phone locations only adds to these concerns.⁵ We therefore request an immediate hearing to oversee the CDC, as well as examine options to reform the agency and address the issues cited above.

The CDC has failed to uphold its mission to increase the "health security of our nation" and to "work 24/7 to protect America from health, safety and security threats."⁶ Some examples include:

1. The CDC allegedly purchased Americans' cell phone location data to track compliance with school closures, curfews, restrictions on places of worship, and movement

¹ William Brangham & Courtney Norris, *How the Latest CDC Guidance on COVID-19 is Creating Unnecessary Confusion*, PBS NEWS HOUR (Jan. 10, 2022).

² Curt Anderson, *Florida Judge Voids National Mask Mandate for Airplanes, other Travel*, ASSOC. PRESS (Apr. 18, 2022).

³ INTERIM FINDINGS: UNION OFFICIALS WROTE KEY PORTIONS OF THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S SCHOOL REOPENING GUIDANCE, Select Subcomm. On the Coronavirus Crisis, Republican Staff Report (Mar. 30, 2022).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Joseph Cox, *CDC Tracked Millions of Phones to See If Americans Followed COVID Lockdown Orders*, VICE (May 3, 2022).

⁶ *Mission, Role and Pledge*, U.S. CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION (last updated Apr. 29, 2022).

restrictions.⁷ Most troubling is that one of CDC’s stated uses of this invasion of privacy was to “project how much worse things would have been without the [lockdowns].”⁸

2. Former CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield confirmed that CDC bureaucrats were working against reopening schools.⁹ Dr. Redfield testified that his view—that schools should reopen—“was not a common view at CDC” and that he received “pushback” for working to reopen schools.¹⁰ These closures caused irreparable damage to America’s children.¹¹
3. The CDC chose to conceal data and essential information about COVID-19 hospitalizations, at least in part, to control the narrative around vaccine effectiveness.¹² CDC spokeswoman Kristen Nordlund confirmed CDC’s intentional concealment of essential data because “basically, at the end of the day, it’s not yet ready for prime time” and the CDC feared the information could be misinterpreted.¹³ The decision to hide data from the public prevented a more targeted response, likely costing lives.
4. At the end of February 2022, the CDC updated the community masking guidelines which allowed adults to unmask indoors in most areas.¹⁴ Yet, on the CDC’s main school and early childhood education guideline pages, it only notes this change in a banner at the top of the webpages, leaving the old guidance in place below the banner.¹⁵ This has led to mass confusion for schools, parents, physicians, and even the media.¹⁶
5. According to recent testimony, “90 percent” of CDC bureaucrats worked remotely during the worst public health disaster in modern history.¹⁷ Dr. Deborah Birx testified that “this country would have been better served” if CDC employees were operating in person during the pandemic.¹⁸

⁷ Cox, *supra* note 5.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ H. Comm. On Oversight & Reform, Select Subcomm. On the Coronavirus Crisis, Transcribed Interview of Dr. Robert Redfield (Mar. 17, 2022).

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ David Leonhardt, *The Morning newsletter: New Research Shows the High Costs of Long School Closures in Some Communities*, THE N.Y. TIMES (May 5, 2022).

¹² Apoorva Mandavilli, *The C.D.C. Isn’t Publishing Large Portions of the Covid Data It Collects*, THE N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 20, 2022).

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *COVID-19 by County*, U.S. CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION (last visited May 5, 2022).

¹⁵ *Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools*, U.S. CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION (last visited May 5, 2022); *COVID-19 Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs*, U.S. CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION (last visited May 5, 2022).

¹⁶ Asher Lehrer-Small, *An Outdated Website, an Atlantic Article & an Instagram Story: How the CDC Botched Revising Its Mask Guidance for Preschoolers*, THE 74 (Mar. 17, 2022).

¹⁷ H. Comm. On Oversight & Reform, Select Subcomm. On the Coronavirus Crisis, Transcribed Interview of Dr. Brett Giroir (May 3, 2022).

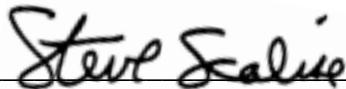
¹⁸ H. Comm. On Oversight & Reform, Select Subcomm. On the Coronavirus Crisis, Transcribed Interview of Dr. Deborah Birx (Oct. 13, 2021).

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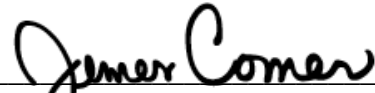
CDC has failed to meet its mission throughout this pandemic. To prepare for future pandemics, it is imperative Democrats abandon their partisan pursuits and, instead, conduct legitimate oversight to reform the CDC. Again, we request you convene an immediate hearing to conduct this important oversight. The future of public health and pandemic preparedness relies on the effectiveness of the CDC.

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter. We look forward to your prompt reply.

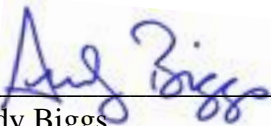
Sincerely,



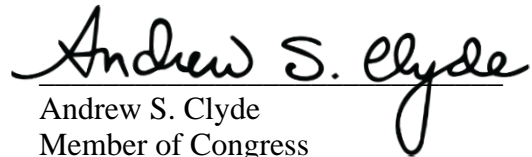
Steve J. Scalise
Ranking Member
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis



James R. Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform



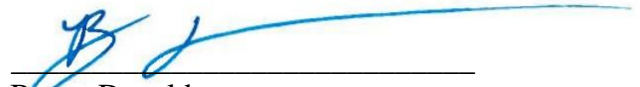
Andy Biggs
Member of Congress



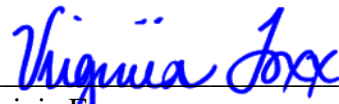
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Member of Congress



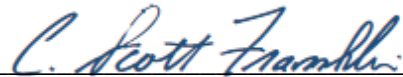
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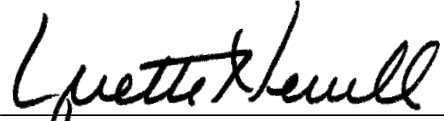
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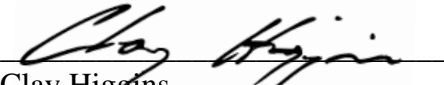
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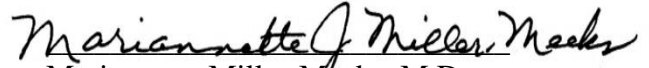
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Pete Sessions
Member of Congress

cc: Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Director
U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention