



August 7, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pence
The White House
Office of the Vice President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Deborah Birx, MD
Coronavirus Task Force Response Coordinator
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

RE: Administration's Decision to Bypass the CDC In The Collection And Analysis of COVID-19 Patient Data

Dear Vice President Pence, Ambassador Birx, and Secretary Azar:

On behalf of the American Society of Transplantation (AST), representing a majority of medical professions engaged in the field of solid organ transplantation, we applaud your ongoing and steadfast leadership to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. As frontline responders, the transplant medical community appreciates our partnership with the Administration, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as we work together to care for patients and hopefully defeat the coronavirus in the near future. However, AST and many other healthcare providers are very concerned with regard to the Administration's recent decision to bypass the CDC in the collection and analysis of COVID-19 patient data.

The AST strongly recommends that the Administration give serious consideration to reversing the decision to bypass the CDC in the collection and analysis of COVID-19 patient data. In addition to reversing this decision, AST encourages the Administration to provide funding to enhance data collection and invest in CDC data reporting, rather than invest in a new data collection mechanism and reporting infrastructure. Our

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Society's membership believes that the recent decision to bypass CDC will undermine medical professional's ability to control the pandemic at a time when COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are surging across the nation.

As you know, a core function of the CDC is to collect and report public health data. This critical work is led by trained experts with the infrastructure necessary to ensure the validity and accuracy of the data in addition to protecting data from misuse. The Administration's recent decision to place medical data collection outside of the CDC may compromise the quality and integrity of the data and threaten our nation's ability to appropriately respond to the pandemic. Further, COVID-19 data collection and reporting must be done in a transparent manner, as this patient data is essential to informing an effective response and establishing public trust in the response. As you know well, data transparency is particularly critical in the midst of an unprecedented national health crisis that is disproportionately impacting certain segments of the U.S. population, including Black/African American, Latino and Native American communities.

The critical function of COVID-19 patient data collection belongs with our nation's top public health agency. The availability of accurate hospital data, coupled with other public health indicators, is essential for the state and local response. Jurisdictions rely upon real time awareness regarding bed availability, shortages of supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE), and other healthcare needs. The Administration's recent decision to bypass CDC and create a duplicate third-party silo data reporting system may undermine jurisdictions ability to secure an accurate picture of the pandemic and limit visibility across neighboring states and localities.

AST strongly urges the Administration to reconsider the decision to bypass the CDC in the collection and analysis of COVID-19 patient data. Our Society would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss further strategies to ensure the availability of critical patient data that we all rely upon as we seek to bring the pandemic under control in the U.S. Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request. If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Formica', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Richard Formica, MD
President