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January 24, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Chad Wolf
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Azar, Secretary Wolf, Secretary Pompeo, and Secretary Chao:

I write to express my concern about the spread of a new strain of coronavirus in China and request guidance on behalf of the American people about when and how the Administration might consider restricting travel to the United States from affected regions of China.

As of Thursday evening, Chinese officials report 830 infections of the virus, 25 of which have been fatal. The virus, which originated in Wuhan, has infected at least one American who recently traveled to the country. Health officials across China have identified multiple other potential cases of infection, and I fear more such infections are yet to come. Unsurprisingly, Chinese officials have reportedly failed to be fully forthcoming with respect to the details of the spread of this virus. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) advisers have noted glaring omissions in the data reported by the Chinese about the number of human-to-human transmissions documented and relationships between infected individuals.

I recognize that the public health community has not yet developed a full understanding of the virus's rate of transmission or case fatality rate and that CDC has a duty to avoid causing undue alarm. That said, in the event that this situation escalates, Americans traveling to and from China may face abrupt disruption. China has already restricted travel to and from Wuhan, leaving foreigners—potentially including many Americans—trapped in the city.

I appreciate that CDC has already initiated screening for the virus at major airports and would urge you to expand this program as aggressively as possible. I also appreciate that CDC has issued a travel advisory for the region. However, I believe Americans deserve advance notice of your plans

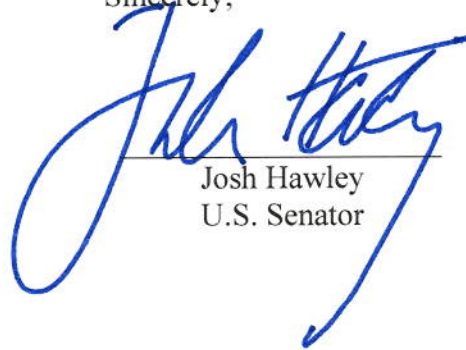
to evaluate more aggressive limitations on travel between the U.S. and China and of any additional considerations that might lead you to refrain from such measures.

I request your response within the week to the following questions:

1. Does the federal government have in place procedures and evaluative criteria to guide decisions about restrictions on air travel in the event of disease outbreaks such as this one?
2. Given the rate at which public health officials are capable of gaining insight into the severity of such an outbreak, can you offer guidance as to when and how the federal government would decide to implement travel restrictions in the event that an outbreak like this one merited them?
3. Have you begun exploring the means by which the federal government might continue to assist China and the international community in containing this outbreak in the event of restrictions on commercial air travel? If not, why not?
4. In the event that federal officials make a preliminary determination to rule out restrictions on air travel, will you commit to inform the public that such a determination has been made in the interests of transparency and appropriate public scrutiny?

Thank you for your work to address this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Josh Hawley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Josh Hawley
U.S. Senator

CC:

The Honorable Robert Redfield
Director
Centers for Disease Control
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

The Honorable Stephen Dickson
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591