

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 2, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy & Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy & Commerce  
2322 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

The San Antonio community has housed and cared for a total of 235 Americans evacuated from Asia and under mandatory federal quarantine at Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA)-Lackland since February 6, 2020, including 91 individuals from Wuhan, China (Cohort I) and 144 from the Diamond Princess cruise ship (Cohort II). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Saturday, February 29, 2020 erroneously allowed an individual from Cohort I with a positive test result for COVID-19 to be released into the San Antonio community. We strongly encourage the House Energy and Commerce Committee to conduct an oversight investigation into this troubling incident which raises serious questions about CDC management, protocols and the attentiveness of the Trump Administration attentiveness to public safety. This investigation should include the specific incident that became public in San Antonio as well as any similar situations where patients under treatment or quarantine for COVID-19 were released while still having pending test results.

This disturbing incident is just the latest misstep by the CDC and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that San Antonio has encountered over the last month. Our community's capacity to provide isolation rooms for the quarantined population is not unlimited and filling them up with people not in need of hospital-level care is an inappropriate use of these rooms. From the very beginning of the quarantine, we have asked the CDC and Department of Defense (DOD) to keep quarantined individuals at Lackland until they require hospital services. Additionally, San Antonio is home to Brook Army Medical Center (BAMC), a world-class military hospital. San Antonio health officials do not understand why the DoD will not allow a state-of-the-art military hospital in our community to care for Americans under mandatory federal quarantine across town at Lackland.

The Administration also cancelled a plan to send asymptomatic-positive evacuees (tested positive for COVID-19, not showing symptoms, not requiring hospitalization) to the Center for Domestic Preparedness in Anniston, Alabama. HHS told us the agreement was secured to allow these individuals to be cared for in another location, other than the local hospitals in San Antonio. However, that plan was quickly terminated by President Trump for political reasons.

The San Antonio health department and hospital systems have responded to the call of duty to care for and monitor COVID-19 evacuees during this stressful period, and the entire country owes them a real debt of gratitude for their competency and resiliency. However, the federal government made the decision

to quarantine high-risk COVID-19 evacuees at Lackland in San Antonio, but once an individual in this group became symptomatic, refused the requests of local health officials, stating that the medical situation is a local responsibility. San Antonio wants to be part of the solution to this public health emergency, but our community requires more support and partnership from the federal government to care effectively for these evacuees.

Our offices have been in touch with the CDC and local officials every day since we first learned of the plan to quarantine patients at Lackland. We have worked with local officials to communicate the concerns of the community to the CDC. Sometimes they have listened and sometimes, unfortunately, they have not. After allowing the release of a positive case into our community, it is time for the Congress to investigate CDC COVID-19 protocols.

Sincerely,



Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress