



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

October 9, 2014

The Honorable Sylvia Burwell
Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Tom Frieden
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Secretary Burwell and Director Frieden:

With the first case of Ebola diagnosed in the United States this week, many Pennsylvanians are deeply concerned about the possible spread of the Ebola virus to the Commonwealth. Pennsylvania has six international airports serving the Commonwealth and surrounding region with thousands of international passengers arriving daily.

Ebola has killed more than 3,400 people in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. In the United States, just this past week Thomas Eric Duncan flew to the United States from Liberia, landed at the Washington Dulles International Airport where he was allowed entry, and then re-boarded for his ultimate destination in Dallas, Texas. Almost a week later, Mr. Duncan tested positive for Ebola and subsequently died after exposing upwards of 100 individuals. Given that the disease has a 21-day incubation period, it still remains unclear how many Americans may have been exposed to this deadly virus.

Recently, 80 Penn State students were identified to be at risk of infection after traveling to areas near the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. They have since been cleared, however, concerns remain. It is my understanding that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been in contact with Pennsylvania hospitals to educate on how to screen for Ebola and properly isolate and treat patients who are either suspected of having Ebola or have been diagnosed with it. Nevertheless, many health care providers on the frontlines of patient care have claimed that they have not been properly trained by hospitals regarding potential admission of patients infected by Ebola. As we know, it takes only one infected patient to spread the disease so it critical that the CDC information is widely disseminated.

While the recent announcement of enhanced screenings is a step in the right direction, President Obama should halt *all* commercial flights from the affected nations until the outbreak is fully


contained in West Africa. Peter Piot, a member of the team that discovered the Ebola virus in 1976, has stated that it is clear to him that there is something fundamentally different with this current outbreak. According to Dr. Piot, the virus can only be curtailed by *isolating* those infected, *monitoring* those who had contact with the infected individual, and *quarantining* individuals when necessary to prevent the further spread of this deadly disease. With an incubation period that can last weeks, it is difficult to accurately screen individuals at the airport, as the case of Mr. Duncan plainly demonstrates. Mistakes in detecting the Ebola virus cannot be made at any level once an infected individual enters the United States.

As a Member of the House Ways and Means Committee with jurisdiction over health care matters in Congress, I would like to know:

- (1) What communication and training has occurred between the CDC and Pennsylvania's health care community including hospitals, local health care clinics, urgent care centers, and physicians?
- (2) Is there a statewide call number for health care professionals and the public to contact if there are Ebola preparedness concerns?
- (3) If there is an Ebola outbreak in Pennsylvania, what is the CDC's contingency operation plans and what information have you disseminated to the above-mentioned health care groups?
- (4) Do you believe there is health care facility in the Commonwealth that is capable of handling several infected individuals at once or would they need to be transported to another facility?

Thank you in advance for your timely response on this urgent national health matter.

Sincerely,


Mike Kelly
Member of Congress

cc: Governor Tom Corbett
Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation