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Sean Patrick Maloney

U.S. House of Representatives

18th District, New York

The Honorable Mark Meadows
Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Meadows:

I write to urge you to expedite funding opportunities for wastewater testing of COVID-19. Wastewater testing will allow us to track COVID-19 in most communities around the country simply by sending samples to qualified, preexisting laboratories. This method captures all carriers, but particularly asymptomatic carriers, much more effectively than individual clinical testing. Ultimately, wastewater testing will help us better plan based on accurate infection rates and provide warning signs of resurgence.

As you probably know, this testing is already occurring on a small scale. The Center for Environmental Health Engineering at Arizona State University has been testing wastewater, previously for seasonal flu, for COVID-19 in part based on a \$1.5 million grant from the National Library of Medicine at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is performing similar work as are researchers in Colorado, Ohio and New York. There are nearly 15,000 wastewater treatment plants throughout the United States covering nearly 75 percent of the country's population. Laboratories like these will detect COVID-19 infection rates in most of the U.S. population weeks before clinical diagnoses. In fact, testing wastewater downstream from high-density, high-risk populations like nursing homes, prisons and dormitories will allow targeted individual testing in an earlier, potentially lifesaving manner. Moreover, researchers agree this method of testing will be logistically easier and significantly more cost effective.

On July 10, 2020, the NIH published a Funding Opportunity Announcement for the Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics-Radical Initiative (RADx-rad) to support new, non-traditional approaches or new applications of existing approaches addressing current gaps in COVID-19 testing. Included in this announcement was a demand for applications regarding wastewater detection. I applaud the NIH assessment that wastewater testing should be included in this program. Unfortunately, the announcement indicates that the estimated award date is December 2020 and no funding amount has been indicated.

I implore you to expedite the award date for this funding opportunity to allow for early COVID-19 detection especially as we enter the fall. Alternatively, I ask for your support in future coronavirus relief legislation to provide localities with dedicated funding for wastewater testing. Funding for quick and easy testing could not be more important as the country braces for the fall when seasonal flu and COVID symptoms will be more difficult to distinguish without widespread, highly accurate testing in communities across the country.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress

cc: Jared Kushner
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