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October 15, 2014

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

Dear Secretary Burwell:

I am writing to you regarding my concerns about the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) overseeing the treatment of Americans infected with the Ebola virus. On October 12, 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed that nurse Nina Pham, employed at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital, was diagnosed with Ebola. It is now reported that a second health care worker, Ms. Amber Joy Vinson at Texas Presbyterian Hospital has tested positive for Ebola. Ms. Pham and Ms. Vinson cared for the now deceased Thomas Eric Duncan and have become the first and second people confirmed to have contracted the disease within the United States. It was initially reported that their infection occurred apparently despite following CDC protocols while treating Mr. Duncan.

There are three hospitals in the United States having treated or currently treating Ebola patients, including Texas Health Presbyterian which is in close proximity to my Congressional district. I am concerned that existing safety standards may be insufficient to guarantee my constituents' and the American public's safety when patients with Ebola are being treated. With a variety of press accounts circulating that a protocol breach, or no concrete protocols at all, caused Ms. Pham's and Ms. Vinson's infections, I am inquiring as to whether CDC protocol was executed without error to prevent these infections? If it was, how did these workers contract the disease and if not, then why did the breach in protocol occur and what is being done to ensure it does not happen again? With Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital not being one of the special isolation unit hospitals in the United States, why weren't additional CDC resources directed immediately after the first confirmed case towards the hospital to ensure these workers would not contract the disease?

I would appreciate a full explanation of how Ms. Pham and Ms. Vinson were infected as well as an explanation of any new safeguards and protocols that HHS plans to initiate to protect Americans treating Ebola patients. A nurse in Spain was the first person known to have contracted the virus outside of Africa. She became infected while treating an Ebola patient despite reportedly following all safety measures in Spain. With similar situations now occurring domestically, until a travel ban is implemented, the administration and HHS must make it their

responsibility to execute every defense against new Ebola infections occurring in the United States.

Thank you for your review of this correspondence and I look forward to your reply. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please feel free to contact me, or my Legislative Director, Scott Cunningham, at 202.225.6605 or scott.cunningham@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Kenny Marchant
Member of Congress