



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 28, 2020

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

Thank you for agreeing to the Committee's request for a briefing on the Department of Homeland Security's efforts to help address the threat to our Nation's health and security from the ongoing novel coronavirus outbreak.

To date, the virus has reportedly killed 106 individuals and infected nearly 4,600 more in China, though the actual number of infected individuals may be significantly higher.^{1,2} Hospitals in affected areas remain overwhelmed, and there is a shortage of vital personal protective equipment.³ Even with an unprecedented quarantine affecting over 50 million people, the outbreak continues to worsen. Furthermore, there are concerns the Chinese government has not been transparent about the outbreak, impeding the response.^{4,5}

The virus has now spread to at least thirteen other countries, with five confirmed cases in the United States. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local health

¹ Gerry Shih, Simon Denyer, *Asia Faces Steep Economic Price as It Moves to Curb Links with China over Virus Fears*, WASHINGTON POST, Jan. 28, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/coronavirus-china-live-updates/2020/01/28/da7664f2-414d-11ea-b503-2b077c436617_story.html.

² Lisa Schnirring, *Experts: NCoV Spread in China's Cities Could Trigger Global Epidemic*, CIDRAP NEWS, Jan. 27, 2020, <http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2020/01/experts-ncov-spread-chinas-cities-could-trigger-global-epidemic>.

³ Teddy Ng and Zhuang Pinghui, *Li Keqiang Orders Wuhan Hospitals to Admit Patients as City Struggles*, SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST, Jan. 27, 2020, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3047753/chinese-premier-li-keqiang-arrives-wuhan-lead-coronavirus-fight>.

⁴ Jon Cohen, *Wuhan Seafood Market May Not Be Source of Novel Virus Spreading Globally*, SCIENCE, Jan. 27, 2020, <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/01/wuhan-seafood-market-may-not-be-source-novel-virus-spreading-globally>.

⁵ Josh Chin, *Wuhan Mayor Says Beijing Rules Partially Responsible for Lack of Transparency*, WALL STREET JOURNAL, Jan. 27, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-premier-tours-virus-epicenter-as-anger-bubbles-at-crisis-response-11580109098>.

departments lead the response domestically, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) plays a key supporting role. As you know, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is supporting the health screenings at our borders; the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is working alongside CBP to notify travelers about disease risk; the Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office's (CWMD) National Biosurveillance Integration Center is working with the CDC and other U.S. government partners to monitor the status of the outbreak; and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is coordinating with the Department of Health and Human Services on preparedness.

Given the outbreak's potential threat to the homeland, DHS must have the plans, authorities, and resources it needs to execute its mission alongside its Federal partners and in conjunction with foreign governments and the private sector. In addition to helping protect the general public, it is imperative that the Department protect its employees, both domestically and abroad. We look forward to a briefing in the coming days to gain a better understanding of how DHS is supporting the national response to the outbreak. We stand ready to assist the Department of Homeland Security and its partners in this important effort.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.


Sincerely,




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