



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

WASHINGTON, DC 20201



August 10, 2020

The Honorable Gerald Connolly
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Connolly:

Thank you for your letter dated June 15, 2020, to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of Inspector General (OIG), requesting that we “examine the plans and procedures of the Department of Health and Human Services for returning employees to Federal offices in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.” HHS-OIG also appreciates the time your staff took on July 23, 2020, to have a conversation about your letter.

As HHS-OIG continues to plan work related to COVID-19, we continually conduct risk-based assessments of HHS programs and then allocate funding for our oversight work based on these risk assessments and available resources. This process is ongoing and involves working closely with our Inspector General partners and the Government Accountability Office to avoid duplication and ensure appropriate jurisdiction. Although we cannot begin work directly responsive to your letter at this time, we value the input of our Hill partners and take this input into account as we continue our consideration process. As part of this process, HHS-OIG is reviewing the oversight materials highlighted by your staff in the conversation mentioned above. OIG currently has underway a study that addresses some of the concerns you raised and may be of interest ([*Assessing HHS Agencies' Adherence to Health, Safety, and Operational Protocols During Repatriation and Quarantine Efforts for the COVID-19 Outbreak*](#)). In the course of this work, HHS-OIG will evaluate how HHS staff were deployed, trained, and protected when assigned tasks that could entail potential exposure to COVID-19, such as work at quarantine sites and at ports of entry. HHS-OIG will analyze steps taken to protect HHS staff and, in turn, the public, during pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment. HHS-OIG will also review the extent to which HHS has established mechanisms to identify and correct any vulnerabilities in deployment protocols. We expect that this ongoing work will lead to the issuance of multiple work products that are scheduled for completion in fiscal year 2021. For more information, we encourage your staff to contact us for a scope and methodology briefing on this ongoing work.

For your reference in addressing questions from HHS employees who have concerns about returning to their duty station, please know that they may submit complaints via the OIG Hotline web page at oig.hhs.gov or by telephone at 1-800-443-8477. HHS-OIG has specifically instructed our hotline staff to monitor for concerns from HHS employees about returning to their offices. We will continue this monitoring as we consider future work.

Finally, I appreciated hearing directly from you and other committee members about their concerns in the May 26, 2020, briefing that you arranged for the House Committee on Oversight and Reform members. As an update to that briefing, OIG is now conducting 30 work plan items

related to COVID-19. Many of these work plan items will respond to concerns expressed at the briefing.

OIG appreciates the opportunity to address your interest in this topic. If you have any questions, please call me at (202) 619-3148, or your staff may contact Christopher Seagle, Director of Congressional Affairs, at (202) 260-7006 or Christopher.Seagle@oig.hhs.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Christi A. Grimm
Principal Deputy Inspector General