BRAD R. WENSTRUP, D.P.M.
CHAIRMAN

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

RAUL RUIZ, M.D.
RANKING MEMBER

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC
2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515–6143
Majority (202) 225–5074
Minority (202) 225–5051

March 13, 2024

Maj. Gen. Paul Friedrichs, M.D. (ret.)
Director
Office of Pandemic Preparedness and Response Policy
The White House
[TRANSMITTED VIA EMAIL]

Dear Maj. Gen. Friedrichs:

Enclosed are post-hearing questions that have been directed to you and submitted to the official record for the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic hearing that was held on Wednesday, March 6, 2024 titled "Examining the White House's Role in Pandemic Preparedness and Response."

To ensure a complete hearing record, please return your written response to the Committee on or before Wednesday, March 27, 2024, including each question in full as well as the name of the member. Your response should be addressed to the Committee office at 2157 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. Please also send an electronic version of your response by email to Marie Policastro, Clerk for the Select Subcommittee, at marie.policastro@mail.house.gov.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request. If you need additional information or have other questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Accountability staff at (202) 225-5074.

Sincerely,

Brad Wenstrup, D.P.M.
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Raul Ruiz, Ranking Member
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic

Questions for Maj. Gen. Paul Friedrichs, M.D. (ret.)
Director
Office of Pandemic Preparedness and Response Policy
The White House

March 6, 2024: Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic hearing titled "Examining the White House's Role in Pandemic Preparedness and Response"

Questions from Chairman Brad Wenstrup, D.P.M.

1) Has the Office of Pandemic Preparedness and Response Policy (OPPR) been involved in National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity (NSABB) discussions or deliberations concerning U.S. policy regarding gain of function research or dual use research of concern? If not, do you anticipate OPPR engaging with the NSABB on these issues? If not, why?

2) Has OPPR provided any policy advice or other counsel to the White House or federal departments and agencies concerning the U.S. position or approach concerning the proposed Pandemic Accords in the World Health Organization? If not, do you expect OPPR will be involved?

3) Monoclonal antibody (mAb) treatments were an important tool during COVID-19 for patients with compromised immune systems. Those with HIV/AIDS, organ transplants, and autoimmune diseases often couldn't rely on vaccines for protection. But mAbs became less effective over time as COVID strains changed. However, these patients are still at great risk for COVID, suffering from higher disease burden and mortality, and need new options in the future.

    - As co-chair of the Public Health and Emergency Medical Countermeasures Enterprise (PHEMCE), how is your office coordinating with HHS to develop new mAbs that can be used to prevent COVID-19 for immune-compromised patients?

    - Does the Administration plan to support new "plug and play" platform technologies, which would allow quick changes to mAbs to keep up with COVID strain changes? If so, how does HHS plan to speed their development?

Questions from Rep. Debbie Dingell

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1. **What steps did OPPR take to ensure that our whole-of-government response stayed on top of the threat posed by this recent respiratory virus season?**

Last year, updated Influenza and COVID vaccines were approved by FDA in July and September respectively. As a result, there was a five-week gap between both vaccines being available at the same time in pharmacies, clinics and doctor's offices. Data indicate that the COVID vaccine uptake rate was around 10% higher for those who also received the Influenza vaccine when both vaccines were available as compared with the first five-week period when only the Influenza vaccine was available.

   a. What role is OPPR playing this year in coordinating with FDA and CDC for influenza and COVID vaccines for 2024?

   b. What actions could OPPR, FDA and CDC take this year to reduce or eliminate the gap between Influenza and COVID vaccines approval and recommendation dates?

   c. What support, if any, do Federal agencies need to achieve closer alignment of Influenza and COVID vaccines approval and recommendation dates?

Questions from Rep. Robert Garcia

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1. In your capacity as Director of the White House Office of Pandemic Preparedness and Response (OPPR), can you elaborate on the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic raised with regards to our country's ability to quickly and effectively procure and distribute needed medical supplies like personal protective equipment, tests, and vaccines?

2. Was it a challenge for the federal government to buy these kinds of supplies early in the pandemic?

3. Last year, I introduced H.R. 3794, the Fast-track Logistics for Acquiring Supplies in a Hurry (FLASH) Act that would authorize the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority to award follow-on production contracts or transactions, procure supplies for experimental or test purposes, and acquire innovative commercial products and commercial services in the event of an emergency like COVID-19. Would a policy like the FLASH Act make a difference if we were faced with a similar emergency—and is this something that could save lives?