

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

Dr. Robert R. Redfield  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, Georgia 30329

March 20, 2020

Dear Director Redfield,

As Congress continues to respond to COVID-19, also known as the Novel Coronavirus, pandemic in the United States, we write to request that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) prioritize disseminating guidance to health providers and doctors on the effects of the virus on pregnant women.

We understand this is a novel virus and our researchers are in the beginning stages of understanding this unique strain. From the onset, the CDC and other health officials have stressed the effects of Coronavirus on elderly and high-risk populations, and we are glad to see efforts around the country to help prevent the spread of the virus in these communities. As members of the Bipartisan Women's Caucus, we want to be sure that the CDC is also looking into another important demographic in this country—pregnant women, who may be set to deliver during this uncertain time. Protecting the health and well-being of pregnant mothers, and their newborn children, is of paramount importance.

Unfortunately, there is still much to be learned on the effects Coronavirus may have on pregnant women. According to the CDC:

“We do not currently know if pregnant women have a greater chance of getting sick from COVID-19 than the general public nor whether they are more likely to have serious illness as a result. Pregnant women experience changes in their bodies that may increase their risk of some infections. With viruses from the same family as COVID-19, and other viral respiratory infections, such as influenza, women have had a higher risk of developing severe illness. It is always important for pregnant women to protect themselves from illnesses.”

The Coronavirus has added a new level of anxiety to expectant parents nationwide. Understandably, the lack of research into the effects that this virus could have on pregnant women adds another burden on families preparing to welcome a new addition to their household. To help provide certainty to pregnant women, any evidence-based information uncovered by the CDC, or other researchers across the country, should be immediately disseminated to the public.

Another area of concern is the risks posed to infants from breastfeeding if a mother is diagnosed with Coronavirus. Although the virus has not been detected in breast milk, the CDC has stated, “we do not know whether mothers with COVID-19 can transmit the virus via breast milk.” At the moment, the CDC is not advising women with known or suspected Coronavirus exposure to avoid breastfeeding. Rather, the interim guidance advises women to wash their hands before touching the baby and wear a face mask, if possible, while

breastfeeding. More definitive knowledge on the possibility of breastmilk transmission may influence important choices for new mothers in the care of their infants.

We request the CDC research the following issues to gain more understanding of the effects of the Coronavirus on pregnant women:

1. What specific risks, if any, does the Coronavirus pose to pregnant women?
2. Do the risks vary depending on gestation period?
3. Are there specific steps that pregnant women should take, besides the CDC's general hygiene guidance, to further protect themselves from possible contamination?
4. Is it safe for women to breastfeed if they have a confirmed case of Coronavirus?
5. Is the Coronavirus able to spread through breastmilk? If so, are there specific actions women should take to avoid transmitting the virus to their kids? Is there a specific time period women should wait to resume breastfeeding?
6. What further steps should hospitals, and other delivery centers, enact to ensure there are no interruptions to deliveries in the maternity ward?"

On behalf of millions of Americans nationwide, we greatly appreciate the leadership of the CDC in these challenging times. We will continue to follow your guidance as we work to navigate this pandemic.

Sincerely,



Brenda L. Lawrence  
Co-Chair, Bipartisan Women's Caucus

Debbie Lesko, Co-Chair  
Bipartisan Women's Caucus

Lois Frankel, Co-Chair  
Democratic Women's Caucus

Jackie Speier, Co-Chair  
Democratic Women's Caucus

Madeleine Dean  
Vice Chair, Bipartisan Women's Caucus

Jenniffer González Colón  
Vice Chair, Bipartisan Women's Caucus

Veronica Escobar  
Vice Chair, Democratic Women's Caucus

Deb Haaland  
Vice Chair, Democratic Women's Caucus