

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 11, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pence  
Vice President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Vice President:

We write today regarding the urgent need to develop a government-implemented passenger portal to assist with containing the coronavirus and future communicable diseases. In the face of the current public health crisis, we must work together to protect Americans both here and abroad from a potential global pandemic.

Contact tracing across all U.S. ports of entry is a key function that will enable the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to contain the coronavirus and future threats from communicable diseases. The CDC outlined the data it needs to properly trace travelers in its “Interim Final Rule: Control of Communicable Diseases: Foreign Quarantine.” Currently, however, there is no tool that provides full, reliable data to the CDC, and private industry, including air carriers, are being asked to step in and fill the void. This is unsustainable and we must address this gap in information immediately so that public health officials are able to reach all individuals entering the U.S., and subsequently those individuals they have come into contact with, in case of potential risk or exposure.

A secure mobile application and single online webform, implemented by the government, would allow the CDC to directly collect information from travelers and provide for more complete, accurate, and timely contact tracing of infected or exposed travelers. This will also ensure that all persons traveling to the United States are held to the same standard, and that the public can have confidence that individuals in need of care, as well as those they have come into contact with since arriving in the United States, will receive it in a safe, timely, and effective manner.

As we discussed at our subcommittee hearing last week, working with private industry partners, the government could have an application ready for consumer use within two weeks and a webform ready within four weeks. Additionally, we understand that the major domestic air carriers have even offered to pay for the development of such an application and webform, then turn it over to the government free of charge once development is complete.

As the situation continues to evolve and individuals enter and travel throughout the country, we must collect information in a reliable manner so that we may accurately and clearly communicate with the public. Ranking Member Sinema spoke with you on March 3 about the webform and sent a follow-up letter on March 4, and we both raised the issue with officials from the Department of Transportation (DOT), CDC, and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) when they testified before our subcommittee last week. These officials committed to us that they would work with each other and impacted industries to try and reach a solution, and we fully expect that commitment to be honored.

Accordingly we strongly urge you to move forward with industry partners, including the major air carriers, and your colleagues on the task force on the development of a government-implemented passenger portal for the collection of contact tracing information. As was stated in our hearing, if additional legal authorities or funding are needed, including for the development and implementation of the aforementioned application and webform, Congress stands ready to act. We only ask that you work with us and keep us informed of the work you are doing and the resources you need so that the United States can meet the current challenge and protect the health and safety of Americans. Accordingly, we ask that you provide answers to the following, in the form of either written responses or a briefing, **no later than March 18, 2020**:

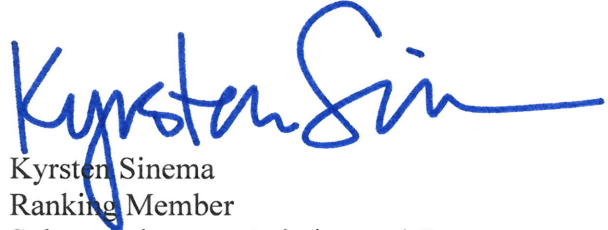
- 1) How the task force plans to work with industry partners to develop a secure application and webform for the government collection of full, reliable contact tracing information.
- 2) What the timeframe is for implementing the secure application and webform.
- 3) What additional resources or legal authorities, if any, are needed for the development and implementation of the secure application and webform as well as the timely collection of full, reliable contact tracing information through those mediums.

Please contact Duncan Rankin or Kate Gonzales at 202-224-5922 or 202-224-4521 with any questions. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ted Cruz  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Aviation and Space  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science,  
and Transportation



Kyrsten Sinema  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Aviation and Space  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science,  
and Transportation

Cc:

The Honorable Alex Azar, Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services  
Mr. Robert O'Brien, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs  
Dr. Robert Redfield, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the  
National Institutes of Health  
The Honorable Stephen Biegun, Deputy Secretary, Department of State  
The Honorable Ken Cuccinelli, Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of Homeland Security  
The Honorable Joel Szabat, Acting Under Secretary for Policy, Department of Transportation  
Mr. Matthew Pottinger, Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor

Mr. Rob Blair, Assistant to the President and Senior Advisor to the Chief of Staff  
Mr. Joseph Grogan, Assistant to the President and Director of the Domestic Policy Council  
Mr. Christopher Liddell, Assistant to the President and Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy  
Coordination  
Mr. Derek Kan, Executive Associate Director, Office of Management and Budget