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October 1, 2020

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

Dr. Redfield,

I write today to request additional information from you concerning the Third Modification and Extension of the No Sail Order released on September 30, 2020. This decision represents an alarming departure from previous Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) policy for cruise ships and I am concerned it may threaten public health. Creating new opportunities for COVID-19 to spread before the virus is contained could lead to the additional loss of human life and significantly delay economic recovery.

From the beginning of this public health crisis, cruise ships like the Diamond Princess have been the source of large virus spreading events. The CDC recognized this “increased risk of transmission on cruise ships” in its March 14, 2020, No Sail Order that suspended cruise ship operations. In that Order, the CDC noted that it had “expended an estimated 38,000 person-hours on the cruise ship COVID-19 response” and that outbreaks on cruise ships had “resulted in countless hours of work for numerous already-burdened public health officials.”

Since that March Order, the need for strong COVID-19 containment measures has only grown. As we head into autumn, infectious disease experts have warned of a potential surge in COVID-19 cases which may place further strain on limited CDC and state and local resources. With this threat looming, and before we have fully contained COVID-19, the timing of the September 30 Order raises serious questions about potential public health consequences.

In light of these concerns, I respectfully request that you answer the following questions by October 9, 2020:

- In issuing the Order, did the CDC consult state and local public health officials and has it provided resources to aid their responses to the resumption of cruise ship operations?
- In issuing the Order, did the CDC consider the amount of resources that may need to be diverted from current containment efforts to its cruise ship COVID-19 response? If yes, please provide that information. If no, why not?

- Given that community and close contact exposure continue to drive the spread of COVID-19, what are the quantitative minimum thresholds for measuring virus transmission that CDC will use to determine whether it is safe to lift the Order prior to or on October 31, 2020?

As the United States exceeds more than 206,000 COVID-19 deaths, it is clear that this pandemic is not fully contained. While progress has been made, I am extremely concerned that the CDC's decision to allow cruise ships to resume operations on or before October 31, 2020, is premature and may jeopardize the health and safety of frontline health workers and the American public. I appreciate your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Doris Matsui". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Doris Matsui
Member of Congress