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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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March 22, 2016

Thomas Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Dr. Frieden:

I write to request information about the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) ongoing investigation of an outbreak of *Elizabethkingia anophelis* in Wisconsin. I understand the CDC is working with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to investigate the source of the outbreak. I appreciate your assistance with this matter.

As you know, infections of these bacteria have led to the deaths of 17 Wisconsinites and 54 Wisconsinites overall have been infected.¹ A Michigan resident also died recently as the result of an infection.² The outbreak, which began in November 2015, is the largest recorded outbreak to date.³ The infections reportedly occur primarily among the elderly who may have weakened immune systems due to other conditions.⁴ Although officials currently do not know the source of the outbreak, past infections have been tied to bacteria found in tap water.⁵ The CDC is apparently examining medicines and personal care products used by the infected individuals to identify the source of the outbreak.⁶

The CDC must work closely with the Wisconsin state authorities to identify the source of the outbreak and take appropriate remedial action. As I monitor this issue, I respectfully request that you provide the following information:

1. Please explain what actions the CDC has taken to address to this outbreak of *Elizabethkingia anophelis*. In your response, please answer the following questions:
 - a. How was the CDC first made aware of these infections in Wisconsin?

¹ Koco McAboy, *CDC looking for Michigan patient's source of Elizabethkingia infection*, WBAY, Mar. 18, 2016, <http://wbay.com/2016/03/18/cdc-looking-for-michigan-patients-source-of-elizabethkingia-infection>; Steve Schuster, *54 Elizabethkingia cases now confirmed in Wisconsin*, WBAY, Mar. 9, 2016, <http://wbay.com/2016/03/09/new-elizabethkingia-cases/>.

² McAboy, *supra* note 1.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

- b. How many employees has the CDC allocated to this investigation?
 - c. What criteria does the CDC utilize to determine how many employees to allocate to a specific outbreak?
 - d. What steps is the CDC taking to alert health care providers or the public about symptoms and signs of a possible infection of *Elizabethkingia anophelis*?
2. Please describe the CDC's interim findings of its investigation into the outbreak of *Elizabethkingia anophelis*.
 3. Please describe the process for confirming an infection of *Elizabethkingia anophelis*. Why is the laboratory test for these bacteria only available at the CDC's headquarters?
 4. How many outbreaks of these bacteria have the CDC investigated in the past? Briefly summarize the findings of past investigations of *Elizabethkingia anophelis* outbreaks.

Please provide this information as soon as possible but no later than April 5, 2016. As you address the outbreak, I am happy to work with you to obtain this information in a manner that prevents any disruption to your efforts.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request. If you have any questions about this request, your staff may contact the Committee staff at 202-224-4751.

Sincerely,


Ron Johnson
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member