

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

PHONE (202) 225-4400

<https://coronavirus.house.gov>

MEMORANDUM

December 16, 2020

To: Members of the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis

Fr: Majority Staff

Re: Supplemental Memorandum on Investigation into Political Interference with Coronavirus Response

This memorandum describes evidence recently obtained by the Select Subcommittee showing that a Trump Administration appointee at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, privately strategized with other top Administration officials as far back as June 2020 about pursuing a so-called “herd immunity” strategy in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Dr. Alexander explicitly endorsed allowing the disease to spread widely among “[i]nfants, kids, teens, young people, young adults, middle aged with no conditions etc.,” writing, “we use them to develop herd...we want them infected.” The views expressed in these private communications were later echoed by President Trump and other officials, raising the serious possibility that key Administration officials have pursued a deliberate or reckless policy of allowing Americans to be infected with the coronavirus.

Consistent with a “herd immunity” approach, the evidence obtained by the Select Subcommittee shows that Dr. Alexander privately acknowledged to other appointees that “[w]e always knew” that “cases will rise” as a result of the Administration’s policies. Yet even as he advocated for letting the coronavirus spread widely, Dr. Alexander also attempted to pass blame for the Administration’s failure to contain the virus to career scientists and public health officials. He also urged colleagues to suppress scientific information about the risk posed by the virus to minority communities that he admitted was “very accurate” out of concern that it would be “use[d] against the president.”

The Select Subcommittee obtained these documents in its ongoing investigation of political appointees’ interference in the work of career officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) during the coronavirus pandemic.¹ Unfortunately, HHS

¹ Letter from Chairman James E. Clyburn, Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, to Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar II and Director Robert R. Redfield, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Sept. 14, 2020) (online at <https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020-09->

continues to withhold other key documents and witnesses the Select Subcommittee needs to determine the extent to which Administration appointees undermined the nation’s public health response and put American lives at greater risk during the pandemic.

On December 10, 2020, the Select Subcommittee released new evidence of what may be deliberate efforts by the Administration to conceal and destroy evidence of political interference in CDC’s work. The Select Subcommittee requested a transcribed interview with CDC Director Robert Redfield on this matter and warned HHS Secretary Alex Azar and Director Redfield that the Select Subcommittee will issue subpoenas if they do not comply with the Subcommittee’s requests.²

I. POLITICAL APPOINTEE PROMOTED SPREADING THE CORONAVIRUS TO ACHIEVE HERD IMMUNITY

Documents obtained by the Select Subcommittee show that top Trump Administration officials repeatedly communicated about pursuing a dangerous herd immunity strategy as far back as June 2020, despite public denials that the Administration was adopting this approach.³ Achieving herd immunity before a vaccine is widely available—which requires a very large portion of the population to get infected with the coronavirus—has been widely rejected by scientists as a dangerous approach that would lead to the deaths of several hundred thousand Americans at a minimum.⁴

For example, on July 3, 2020, Dr. Alexander wrote to senior officials at HHS, including Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for

14.Majority%20to%20Azar%20and%20Redfield%20re%20HHS%20and%20CDC%20on%20Political%20Interference%20.pdf).

² Letter from Chairman James E. Clyburn, Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, to Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar II and Director Robert R. Redfield, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Dec. 10, 2020) (online at <https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020-12-10.Clyburn%20to%20HHS%20re%20Redfield%20%281%29.pdf>).

³ In a previously reported June 30, 2020, email that Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo forwarded to Director Redfield, CDC senior advisor Nina Witkofsky, and White House Liaison Catherine Granito, Dr. Alexander wrote: “Importantly, having the virus spread among the young and healthy is one of the methods to drive herd immunity. This was not the intended strategy but all must be on deck now and it is contributing positively at some level.” Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo, Department of Health and Human Services, et al. (July 1, 2020) (SSCC-0006774 – 78) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.07.01%20SSCC-0006774_Redacted.pdf).

⁴ See, e.g., Haley E. Randolph and Dr. Luis B. Barreiro, *Herd Immunity: Understanding COVID-19, Immunity* (May 19, 2020) (online at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7236739/); Dr. Saad B. Omer, et al, *Herd Immunity and Implications for SARS-CoV-2 Control*, *JAMA* (Oct. 19, 2020) (online at jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2772167); *Early Herd Immunity Against COVID-19: A Dangerous Misconception*, Johns Hopkins University of Medicine (online at coronavirus.jhu.edu/from-our-experts/early-herd-immunity-against-covid-19-a-dangerous-misconception); Infectious Diseases Society of America and HIV Medicine Association, “*Herd Immunity*” *Is Not an Answer to a Pandemic* (Oct. 14, 2020) (online at www.idsociety.org/news-publications-new/articles/2020/herd-immunity-is-not-an-answer-to-a-pandemic/).

Public Affairs Ryan Murphy, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs for Public Health Bill Hall, and Deputy Assistant Secretary and National Spokesperson Caitlin Oakley:

So the bottom line is if it is more infectiousness [sic] now, the issue is who cares? If it is causing more cases in young, my word is who cares...as long as we make sensible decisions, and protect the elderly [sic] and nursing homes, we must go on with life....who cares if we test more and get more positive tests...⁵

The following day, July 4, 2020, Dr. Alexander wrote to Mr. Caputo and other HHS officials:

There is no other way, we need to establish herd, and it only comes about allowing the non-high risk groups expose themselves to the virus. PERIOD. We continue the public health message of proper hygiene, hand washing, protecting elderly at your homes and nursing care facilities, social distancing and so on...but we go on and let our societies open up fully NOW. If the hospitalizations occur in young and they get severe illness, then that's a different story and we will then have a huge mess on our hands and real nightmare. But that is not the case of now.⁶

In a follow-up message, he explained:

Infants, kids, teens, young people, young adults, middle aged with no conditions etc. have zero to little risk....so we use them to develop herd...we want them infected...and recovered...with antibodies....hospitals are NOW geared, PPE in place, ICUs beds are on the ready, doctors and nurses alert, the syndrome is crystalized... etc.⁷

Similarly, on July 24, 2020, Dr. Alexander wrote to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Stephen Hahn, FDA Associate Commissioner for External Affairs John Wagner, and numerous HHS officials including Mr. Caputo, Mr. Murphy, and Ms. Oakley, suggesting that “it may be that it will be best if we open up and flood the zone and let the kids and young folk get infected” as a strategy to get “natural immunity...natural exposure....” The next day, Dr. Alexander sent follow-up messages about infection rates on two

⁵ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo, Department of Health and Human Services, et al. (July 3, 2020) (SSCC-0006598 – 600) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.07.03%20SSCC-0006598-6600_Redacted.pdf) (emphasis added).

⁶ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo, Department of Health and Human Services, et al. (July 4, 2020) (SSCC-0007223 – 25) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.07.04%20SSCC-0007223-25_Redacted.pdf) (emphasis added).

⁷ *Id.* (emphasis added).

ships where outbreaks occurred. He noted that approximately 20 percent of passengers on these ships were infected with the coronavirus and asserted:

The 20% infection rate is important and may suggest that 20% is needed for herd immunity to box this virus in, and not 70%. We might be able to control this virus if we aggressively lock granny down, maybe even quarantine. Acutely regulate nursing homes for safety, message the younger people to behave responsibly, ensure all the PPE and hospitals are ramped up, and unleash the rest of the healthy society to get to our 20%....

Mr. Caputo responded directly to Dr. Alexander, asking “How can this be researched and proven true or false?” In replying to Mr. Caputo with additional information, Dr. Alexander stated, “why not consider it????”⁸

Three days later, on July 27, 2020, Dr. Alexander wrote to Director Redfield speculating that the decision to close colleges and universities for in-person learning may have resulted in increased spread of the coronavirus, because students may have taken “the virus home to mommy and daddy who then infected granny at home.” Dr. Alexander suggested it may be better to leave students on campus and allow them to spread the virus to each other, stating:

[W]e never ever lock down a well ‘healthy’ society, no instance of this ever...we essentially took off the battlefield the most potent weapon we had...younger healthy people, children, teens, young people who we needed to fastly [sic] infect themselves, spread it around, develop immunity, and help stop the spread...

He noted that high-risk individuals, such as the elderly, could be locked down “until we had our herd via natural exposure or vaccine...whichever came first.”⁹

Following these emails, President Trump publicly expressed support for pursuing herd immunity, stating in an August 31, 2020, interview: “Once you get to a certain number, you know—we use the word herd, right? Once you get to a certain number, it’s going to go away.”¹⁰ President Trump reiterated that sentiment at a September 14, 2020, townhall, stating: “You’ll develop herd—like a herd mentality,” and “it’s going to be herd-developed, and that’s going to

⁸ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo, Department of Health and Human Services, Commissioner Stephen Hahn, Food and Drug Administration, et al. (July 24, 2020) (SSCC-0005315 – 37 at SSCC-0005323 – 26) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.07.26%20SSCC-0005315-37_Redacted.pdf).

⁹ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Director Robert Redfield, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (July 27, 2020) (SSCC-0002904 – 05) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.07.27%20SSCC-0002904-05_Redacted.pdf).

¹⁰ *‘That’s Certainly Not My Approach’: Fauci Rejects Pursuing Herd Immunity*, Politico (Sept. 2, 2020) (online at www.politico.com/news/2020/09/02/anthony-fauci-rejects-herd-immunity-407747).

happen.”¹¹ White House Coronavirus Task Force member Dr. Scott Atlas has also publicly embraced this dangerous strategy.¹²

On October 2, 2020, Secretary Azar testified before the Select Subcommittee, “Herd immunity is not the strategy of the U.S. government with regard to coronavirus,” and said the government’s mission is to “keep coronavirus cases down to the lowest level possible.”¹³ However, just days later, Secretary Azar met with Dr. Atlas and three other outspoken proponents of this discredited strategy. Afterwards, Secretary Azar publicly praised their discredited views, stating that during the meeting, “we heard strong reinforcement of the Trump Administration’s strategy of aggressively protecting the vulnerable while opening schools and the workplace.”¹⁴

II. SENIOR ADVISOR PRIVATELY ADMITTED THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION KNEW POLICIES WOULD INCREASE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS

Documents show that Dr. Alexander admitted privately that the Trump Administration was aware its policies would not only fail to stop the spread of the virus, but would lead to an increase in cases. These private admissions contradict the rosy public statements from the White House and HHS touting the Administration’s response to the pandemic.

In June 2020, Dr. Alexander privately acknowledged that the Administration’s push to quickly reopen the economy in the Spring led to an increase in coronavirus cases. On June 16, Vice President Pence wrote in an op-ed that “panic” over a second wave of coronavirus infections “is overblown” and claimed that “all 50 states have begun to reopen in a safe and responsible manner.”¹⁵ But approximately a week later, on June 24, Dr. Alexander wrote an email to Mr. Caputo, HHS senior advisor Brad Traverse, and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs for Human Services Mark Weber:

¹¹ *Trump Says with ‘a Herd Mentality’ Covid-19 Coronavirus Will Go Away*, Forbes (Sept. 16, 2020) (online at www.forbes.com/sites/brucelee/2020/09/16/trump-says-with-a-herd-mentality-covid-19-coronavirus-will-go-away/?sh=7874c7921dde).

¹² *New Trump Pandemic Adviser Pushes Controversial ‘Herd Immunity’ Strategy, Worrying Public Health Officials*, Washington Post (Aug. 31, 2020) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-coronavirus-scottatlas-herd-immunity/2020/08/30/925e68fe-e93b-11ea-970a-64c73a1c2392_story.html).

¹³ Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, *Hybrid Hearing with Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar II* (Oct. 2, 2020) (online at <https://coronavirus.house.gov/subcommittee-activity/hearings/hybrid-hearing-secretary-health-and-human-services-alex-m-azar-ii>).

¹⁴ Letter from Chairman James E. Clyburn and Rep. Jamie Raskin, Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, to Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar II (Oct. 9, 2020) (online at <https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020-10-09.Clyburn%20and%20Raskin%20to%20Azar%20re%20Herd%20Immunity.pdf>).

¹⁵ The White House, *Press Release: There Isn’t a Coronavirus ‘Second Wave’* (June 16, 2020) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/articles/vice-president-mike-pence-op-ed-isnt-coronavirus-second-wave/).

There is a rise in cases due to testing and also simultaneously due to the relaxing of restrictions, less social distancing. **We always knew as you relax and open up, cases will rise...**¹⁶

In a June 30, 2020, email that Mr. Caputo forwarded to Director Redfield, CDC senior advisor Nina Witkofsky, and White House Liaison Catherine Granito, Dr. Alexander wrote: “We expected to see upticks in cases due to the increased testing, and the relaxation of constraints e.g. lockdowns etc.”¹⁷

Similarly, in a July 29, 2020, email to Mr. Caputo, Ms. Witkofsky, and other HHS officials, Dr. Alexander admitted that the Administration’s early response to the virus had allowed cases in the United States to increase. He explained, “we always knew that cases were coming in” during the five-week period between the partial cessation of travel from China on January 31, 2020, and from Europe on March 11, 2020. He also acknowledged a “catastrophic failure with testing” during this period but blamed public health officials, claiming, “they all failed this administration and today, we are playing catchup.”¹⁸

III. TRUMP ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS SOUGHT TO DOWNPLAY THE VIRUS THREAT TO HELP PRESIDENT TRUMP WIN REELECTION

Emails also show that senior HHS officials, including Mr. Caputo and Dr. Alexander, sought to promote public messages that downplayed the danger posed by the virus, attempted to blame public health officials for the pandemic, and tried to discredit scientists such as Dr. Anthony Fauci who told Americans the truth about the virus—with the apparent goal of helping President Trump win reelection.

a. Officials Sought to Downplay the Danger of the Virus to the Public

Mr. Caputo, Dr. Alexander, and other appointees sought to promote positive news about the pandemic and downplay coronavirus risks to the American people. In a May 19, 2020, email, Mr. Traverse wrote to Dr. Alexander, Mr. Caputo, and other HHS staff that he was concerned a New York Times article on coronavirus risk could be touted “as a reason not to open up America in red states.” In response, Dr. Alexander suggested downplaying coronavirus risks

¹⁶ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo, Department of Health and Human Services, et al. (June 24, 2020) (SSCC-0007182) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.06.24%20SSCC-0007182_Redacted.pdf) (emphasis added).

¹⁷ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo, Department of Health and Human Services, et al. (July 1, 2020) (SSCC-0006774 – 78) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.07.01%20SSCC-0006774_Redacted.pdf).

¹⁸ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Senior Advisor Nina Witkofsky, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, et al. (July 29, 2020) (SSCC-0005309 – 14) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.07.29%20SSCC-0005309-14_Redacted.pdf).

by comparing the virus to the seasonal flu, writing: “we can explain it this way: The risk in US or even globally of person 60 years and less is less than seasonal influenza, the data shows this.”¹⁹

On May 30, 2020, Dr. Alexander wrote to CDC Press Officer Scott Pauley and other officials at CDC and HHS with comments on a CDC press statement regarding coronavirus hospitalization rates by race and ethnicity. He stated:

Here is the issue: **if the communication is left with just the statement that minoring [sic] groups are at higher risk then on its face this is very accurate, however, in this election cycle that is the kind of statement coming from CDC that the media and Democrat [sic] antagonists will use against the president.** They are already doing it and accusing him directly of the deaths in the African American community from COVID. This is very wrong for those deaths have more to do with socioeconomic status and each time we talk about these deaths we need to tell the nation why these deaths happened. This was due to decades of democrat [sic] neglect, case in point New York. To me, at this point any mention, given they are trying to tear this president down, is to contextualize the issue and explain to the nation constantly why this has happened and how the president’s economic policies for minorities is the only way out.²⁰

On June 15, 2020, Dr. Alexander urged HHS staff to release more “positive statements” supporting the Administration’s pandemic response:

If any of these public health folk, just one, would stand there and state that this President, this gov, this Secretary, has done a good job and it is getting better. And we will be alright. But not one has yet said it the way I just wrote it. The nation needs leaders in this to show them confidence, don’t just spout facts, it gets lost. Tell me bread and butter info I need to hear, tell me that it is getting better and give us positive statements.²¹

Five days later, on June 20, 2020, Mr. Caputo responded to a draft CDC statement regarding extending the ban on passenger cruise ship travel asking, “Is this press release

¹⁹ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Senior Advisor Brad Traverse, Department of Health and Human Services, et al. (May 19, 2020) (SSCC-0009073 – 74) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.05.19%20SSCC-0009073-74_Redacted.pdf).

²⁰ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Press Officer Scott Pauley, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, et al. (May 30, 2020) (SSCC-0009080 – 83) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.05.30%20SSCC-0009080-83_Redacted.pdf) (emphasis added).

²¹ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo, Department of Health and Human Services, et al. (June 15, 2020) (SSCC-0007320 – 21) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.06.15%20SSCC-007320-21_Redacted.pdf).

supposed to frighten readers?” Dr. Alexander replied that he made revisions to the draft statement and “toned it down,” noting:

[S]uch a piece needs to not frighten, but inform and constantly showcase the good work and hope etc. We are far better off than 4 mths ago thanks to the good work at CDC, NIH, FDA etc. and its leaders. So showcase this. In any story you put out. Else media will have a field day.²²

Following an alarming surge in cases in June, Dr. Alexander discussed the “key message” to communicate to the public regarding the pandemic in a June 24, 2020, email. He wrote, “If we test more we will find more...but are the new cases problematic??? That’s the key...” Dr. Alexander added: “We need also to tout the good stories as we know of elderly with serious conditions who get it and survive...this is key to tell...”²³

In July 31, 2020, messages to Ms. Witkofsky regarding a draft op-ed on children and the coronavirus, Dr. Alexander acknowledged, “The piece is less about numbers but to tell a good story” and “we are trying to give good news here.”²⁴

b. Trump Administration Officials Sought to Discredit Government Scientists Who Provided Truthful Information

Mr. Caputo and Dr. Alexander also cast blame on public health officials for the pandemic and sought to discredit Dr. Fauci and other scientists who provided truthful information to the public that contradicted Trump Administration talking points.

In a June 12, 2020, email to HHS Press Secretary Katherine McKeogh and other HHS staff, Dr. Alexander expressed his “dismay” about statements made by Dr. Fauci supporting the

²² Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo, Department of Health and Human Services, et al. (June 20, 2020) (SSCCManual-000216 – 19) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.06.20%20SSCCManual-000216%20%E2%80%932019_Redacted.pdf); *see also* Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Benjamin Haynes, Deputy Chief, News Media Branch, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, et al. (June 20, 2020) (SSCCManual-000220 – 23) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.06.20%20SSCCManual-000220%20%E2%80%932023_Redacted.pdf).

²³ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo, Department of Health and Human Services, et al. (June 24, 2020) (SSCC-0007182) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.06.24%20SSCC-0007182_Redacted.pdf).

²⁴ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Senior Advisor Nina Witkofsky, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, et al. (July 31, 2020) (SSCC-0002931 – 33) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.07.31%20SSCC-0002931-33_Redacted.pdf).

World Health Organization and asked, “why would Dr. Fauci continually stand apart from the President as if we cannot understand the facts.”²⁵

In a June 29, 2020, email, Dr. Alexander baselessly accused scientists of trying to “destroy the nation and people’s lives just to make the President look bad,” writing:

The media and left have help [sic] COVID proliferate and the left scientists who work against the administration...they wont help and this saddens and horrifies me for I understand whats on tap now...this can be catastrophic. They want to destroy the nation and people’s lives just to make the President look bad...saving lives is not their aim...winning at all costs...this is the real tragedy we face.”²⁶

The following day, in a previously reported June 30, 2020, email, Dr. Alexander criticized CDC Principal Deputy Director Anne Schuchat for providing accurate information about the worsening state of the coronavirus pandemic in an interview. Dr. Alexander made a series of unfounded attacks on Dr. Schuchat, including calling her “duplicitous,” accusing her of lying regarding coronavirus risks, and stating, “Her aim is to embarrass the President here” for suggesting that everyone needs to get on board with wearing masks.²⁷

In a July 3, 2020, email obtained by the Select Subcommittee, Dr. Alexander complained that Dr. Fauci had warned the public to “expect a dramatic increase in spread.” Dr. Alexander continued: “He just wont stop!!!!!!!!!!!!!! He cant keep quiet...and he is not on the same page of the gov. ...does he think he is the President???”²⁸ On July 4, he asked HHS staff to “stop Fauci from talking” to the press, baselessly suggesting that Dr. Fauci “is confusing people...he flip flops the message too much...and the result is now he is not credible.”²⁹

²⁵ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Press Secretary Katherine McKeogh, Department of Health and Human Services, et al. (June 12, 2020) (SSCC-0007362 – 64) (online at <https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.06.12%20SSCC-0007362-64%20Redacted.pdf>).

²⁶ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Press Secretary Katherine McKeogh, Department of Health and Human Services, et al. (June 29, 2020) (SSCC-0007155 – 59) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.06.30%20SSCC-0007155-59_Redacted.pdf).

²⁷ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo, Department of Health and Human Services, et al. (July 1, 2020) (SSCC-0006774 – 78) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.07.01%20SSCC-0006774_Redacted.pdf).

²⁸ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo, Department of Health and Human Services, et al. (July 3, 2020) (SSCC-0006598 – 600) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.07.03%20SSCC-0006598-6600_Redacted.pdf).

²⁹ Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Michael Caputo, Department of Health and Human Services, et al. (July 4, 2020) (SSCC-0007223 – 25) (online at

Less than a week later, on July 10, 2020, President Trump publicly criticized Dr. Fauci, claiming he “made a lot of mistakes.”³⁰ On July 14, Assistant to the President Peter Navarro published an op-ed in USA Today attacking Dr. Fauci and making claims the newspaper’s editor found “were misleading or lacked context.”³¹

On July 29, 2020, Dr. Alexander wrote to Ms. Witkofsky, Mr. Caputo, and other senior HHS officials to express concern that a CDC study—which linked 38 percent of the earliest reported cases of the coronavirus in the Americas to travel in Italy—“can be used to damage the administration.” To rebut potential bad press about the delay in closing travel from Europe, Dr. Alexander suggested that the Administration should seek to shift the blame to scientists who he claimed “failed to properly advise on border closures with Fauci...these people failed the nation. Regardless of if they are helping now to fix it, this is due to their failures.” He added:

If I were the administration I would remind all that it were [sic] Dr. Fauci as the lead who kept saying early Feb and late Feb 2020 that this was no issue and the US had nothing to worry about. ... If the administration is now accused of closing too late with Europe which is what I know now since Redfield gave the media etc. an ‘in’ and now this Lancet article, then the administration must center Fauci et al. and maybe censure them...³²

On September 13, 2020, Mr. Caputo made a series of unfounded claims in a public video, asserting that CDC scientists were plotting “how they’re going to attack Donald Trump next,” and stating: “There are scientists who work for this government who do not want America to get well, not until after Joe Biden is president.”³³

https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.07.04%20SSCC-0007223-25_Redacted.pdf).

³⁰ *Trump Says Fauci ‘Made a Lot of Mistakes,’* NBC News (July 10, 2020) (online at www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/trump-says-fauci-made-lot-mistakes-n1233402).

³¹ Peter Navarro, *Anthony Fauci Has Been Wrong About Everything I Have Interacted with Him on*, USA Today (July 14, 2020) (online at www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/todaysdebate/2020/07/14/anthony-fauci-wrong-with-me-peter-navarro-editorials-debates/5439374002/); see also *Fauci Is Sidelined by the White House as He Steps up Blunt Talk on Pandemic*, Washington Post (July 11, 2020) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/07/11/fauci-trump-coronavirus/); *White House Takes Aim at Fauci But Trump Has No Current Plans to Fire Him, Source Says*, CNN (July 13, 2020) (online at www.cnn.com/2020/07/12/politics/fauci-trump-coronavirus/index.html).

³² Email from Senior Advisor Paul Alexander, Department of Health and Human Services, to Senior Advisor Nina Witkofsky, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, et al. (July 29, 2020) (SSCC-0005309 – 14) (online at https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020.07.29%20SSCC-0005309-14_Redacted.pdf).

³³ *Trump Health Aide Pushes Bizarre Conspiracies and Warns of Armed Revolt*, New York Times (Sept. 14, 2020) (online at www.nytimes.com/2020/09/14/us/politics/caputo-virus.html).

The following day, on September 14, 2020, the Select Subcommittee launched this investigation and sought interviews with Mr. Caputo and Dr. Alexander, among others.³⁴ Two days later, HHS announced that both officials would be leaving their roles, with Mr. Caputo taking leave and Dr. Alexander being removed from the Department permanently.³⁵

The Administration continued its attacks on scientists following the departures of Mr. Caputo and Dr. Alexander. For instance, on September 16, 2020, President Trump publicly rebuked Director Redfield after he provided scientifically accurate testimony that face masks may be “more guaranteed” to protect against the coronavirus than a vaccine.³⁶ In October, President Trump publicly criticized Dr. Fauci as “a disaster,” adding, “People are tired of hearing Fauci and these idiots, all these idiots who got it wrong.”³⁷

³⁴ Letter from Chairman James E. Clyburn, Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, to Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar II and Director Robert R. Redfield, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Sept. 14, 2020) (online at <https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020-09-14.Majority%20to%20Azar%20and%20Redfield%20re%20HHS%20and%20CDC%20on%20Political%20Interference%20.pdf>).

³⁵ *Top Trump Health Appointee Taking Medical Leave After Insurrection Remarks*, Washington Post (Sept. 16, 2020) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/09/16/caputo-departure-hhs/).

³⁶ *Trump Scorns His Own Scientists over Virus Data*, New York Times (Sept. 16, 2020) (online at www.nytimes.com/2020/09/16/us/politics/trump-cdc-covid-vaccine.html).

³⁷ *Trump Calls Fauci ‘a Disaster’ and Shrugs Off Virus as Infections Soar*, New York Times (Oct. 19, 2020) (online at www.nytimes.com/2020/10/19/us/politics/trump-fauci-covid.html).