



May 11, 2026

The Honorable Dr. Jay Bhattacharya
Acting Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road NE
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Acting Director Bhattacharya,

Since April 1, 2026, the world has tracked the hantavirus outbreak that began among individuals on the *MV Hondius* cruise ship and has so far led to three fatalities. While reporting indicates that the pandemic potential remains low¹, a heightened sense of fear and unease still persists due to the residual impacts of COVID-19. These concerns make it essential for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to fulfill its obligation to provide timely and accurate information to both health professionals and the public. It is disappointing that the CDC has not yet held a public press briefing for Americans to learn about this outbreak and that it took over a month for the CDC to release a clinician brief. Among the many lessons learned from COVID-19, one of the most important is the role of the federal government in being transparent on the status of response efforts and articulating the potential risks of a pathogen to the public.

CDC has historically demonstrated excellence in its ability to conduct health surveillance as well as provide excellent technical collaboration with our international partners.² This outbreak continues to highlight the need for robust international cooperation in regard to global health security.³ The hantavirus outbreak has also underscored our need for a robust CDC, with dedicated, permanent leadership, and health workforce to effectively respond to infectious disease outbreaks. Further, the lack of updates to the public on the development of medical countermeasures for this outbreak is deeply concerning.

I urge CDC to provide daily updates to the public, clinicians, and to Congress on their response efforts to the hantavirus. Cooperation among the federal government and our international partners is key during an infectious disease outbreak, and it is important for the public to see this collaboration continue. Some of the issues to be addressed should include, but not be limited to:

¹ <https://www.c-span.org/clip/news-conference/who-official-on-hantavirus-outbreak-this-is-not-coronavirus/5200023>

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2026/05/07/hantavirus-outbreak-cruise-tracing-contacts/>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/07/world/europe/hantavirus-cruise-ship-outbreak.html>

- What should Americans do if they believe they have been exposed to hantavirus through contact with an infected individual or through the droppings of an infected rodent?
- How can an individual be tested for hantavirus?
- Where – both in the United States and globally – are there confirmed cases of hantavirus?
- Has the CDC projected the future spread of hantavirus, and what is the current expected duration of time for this outbreak?
- What is not yet known about the hantavirus outbreak and how are those knowledge gaps being addressed by ongoing and future efforts?
- What steps is CDC taking to inform the public and health professionals about how to identify hantavirus and reduce their risk of becoming infected?
- Is CDC collaborating with NIH, ASPR, and FDA to discover potential treatments and preventative measures, including monoclonal antibodies and vaccines?
- How is CDC collaborating with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other foreign governments and multilateral bodies to track the progress of this outbreak?

Sincerely,

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

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator