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United States Senate

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Mr. Jonathan Moore
Acting Assistant Secretary
U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Organizations
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC

Dear Acting Assistant Secretary Moore,

We write to express concern regarding the ongoing outbreak of the novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) which originated in Wuhan, China. Specifically, we write to express concern that Taiwan – where infections have been confirmed – is once again being excluded from World Health Organization (WHO) outbreak response efforts due to Chinese government pressure.

The virus has claimed 17 lives thus far and has infected more than 400 people in countries including Japan, Thailand, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and most recently, the United States. On January 22, the WHO convened an emergency committee of experts to determine whether to declare the novel Coronavirus a Public Emergency of International Concern.¹

Even though Taiwan is affected, Taiwanese representatives were not present at the meeting. Due to China's claims of sovereignty over Taiwan, the Chinese government has blocked Taiwan's membership and even observer status at the WHO since 2017.² Taiwan's continued exclusion may only exacerbate the deadly consequences of this international public health crisis and those to follow in the years to come. Taiwan's ports of entry routinely receive visitors from mainland China, which means that WHO must include Taiwan in international efforts to disseminate timely, accurate information on prevention and provide resources to protect the health and safety of the millions who call the island home.

Experts have raised alarm and say the current situation mirrors the 2003 outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), where, due in part to lack of access to WHO resources,

¹ Natasha Kassam, *As Wuhan Virus Spreads, Taiwan has No Say at WHO*, Foreign Policy (Jan. 22, 2019), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/22/china-health-coronavirus-wuhan-virus-spreads-taiwan-no-say-who/>

² Chris Horton, *Blocked by China, Taiwan Presses to join U.N. Agency's Meeting*, The New York Times (May 8, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/08/world/asia/taiwan-world-health-china.html>

Taiwan was unable to contain the spread of the disease. Thirty-seven people died in Taiwan during the 2003 SARS outbreak, and there were 346 confirmed SARS cases.³⁴

We request a briefing by February 7, 2020 to address the following concerns:

1. What steps has the State Department taken to advance Taiwan's bid to gain membership to the WHO?
2. Has the State Department raised this issue of Taiwan's membership in the WHO at high-level bilateral or multilateral forums with the Peoples Republic of China?
3. According to WHO account statements, the U.S. has an outstanding balance to the WHO amounting to \$71 million as of November 2019.⁵ Does the State Department intend to pay what it owes to the WHO as is intended by Congress? If so, when? What is the cause of this delay? Finally, has the State Department assessed whether its budget burden may be impacting WHO's responsiveness in light of this current potential pandemic?

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. If you have questions or concerns, please contact my foreign policy staff in my office at 202-224-2742.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

³Taiwan Revises Data on SARS; Total Toll Drops. The Associated Press (Oct. 5, 2003), <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/05/world/taiwan-revises-data-on-sars-total-toll-drops.html>

⁴ Jonathan Cheng, *As Virus Spreads, Isolated Taiwan Risks Being a Loophole in War on Epidemics*, The Wall Street Journal (Jan. 22, 2020), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/taiwan-virus-case-highlights-chinese-efforts-to-exclude-taipei-from-world-health-organization-11579634031>

⁵ The World Health Organization, Statement of Account: United States of America (as of 30 November 2019) https://www.who.int/about/finances-accountability/funding/account_statement/usa_en.pdf?ua=1