

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 6, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, Southwest  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

We write to ask that you immediately waive the restrictions on research with human fetal tissue, which are preventing federally-funded scientists from advancing important studies that could potentially prevent, treat, or cure the 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

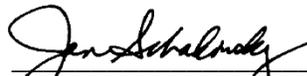
You have repeatedly stated that your agency is doing everything you can to develop vaccines and treatments for the novel coronavirus. However, in June 2019 your agency banned all intramural research using human fetal tissue and placed new restrictions on extramural research, including review by an ethics panel that still has yet to be set up. As a result, scientists at the National Institute of Health (NIH) and across the country have been stopped from pursuing promising biomedical research into conditions and diseases that affect millions because it involves the use of human fetal tissue—including coronavirus research.

Because of your restrictions, NIH is unable to utilize human fetal tissue to develop animal models of COVID-19 that can test potential vaccines and treatments to decelerate or even end this global health crisis. This inaction may ultimately put Americans further at risk of disease or death from COVID-19. Instead of exploring every possible option for a COVID-19 therapeutic, U.S. scientists are now urging their international counterparts to rush to conduct this research while their hands remain tied.<sup>1</sup>

We urge you to prioritize science during an unprecedented global health emergency and remove all barriers to lifesaving research. The United States is a leader in biomedical research, and our nation should be leading the world to advance research that can alleviate this pandemic.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/trump-ban-on-fetal-tissue-research-blocks-coronavirus-treatment-effort/2020/03/18/ddd9f754-685c-11ea-abef-020f086a3fab\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/trump-ban-on-fetal-tissue-research-blocks-coronavirus-treatment-effort/2020/03/18/ddd9f754-685c-11ea-abef-020f086a3fab_story.html)

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