

United States Senate

September 7, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

I write to request the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) include schools in future state distributions plans for rapid COVID-19 testing as supplies allow.

As students across the country begin school this fall, from kindergartners enrolling for the first time to advanced graduate students completing their degrees, access to rapid, reliable testing will play a critical role in their ability to participate in in-person learning in the coming weeks. Across the state of Colorado, school districts, local authorities, families, students, and institutions of higher education continue to make choices about the status of in-person learning in consultation with the state government. These choices often hinge on the ability to effectively identify and address cases before they spread into an outbreak, threatening the health of students and staff.

Robust, accurate rapid testing helps ensure that schools can identify cases early to prevent potential outbreaks before they begin. While some schools and counties have been able to implement robust testing strategies, many others continue to struggle with both the affordability and availability of testing. Reports show this is a particular concern for rural schools in Colorado that are not located near convenient, accessible testing sites.

I appreciate the Department of Health and Human Services' work to provide states with rapid COVID-19 testing, including the prioritization of testing for senior care providers, and request consideration of the importance of education and student safety as you continue working on future distribution plans.

Sincerely,



Cory Gardner
United States Senator