

FRANK PALLONE, JR., NEW JERSEY  
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ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

### COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927

Minority (202) 225-3641

October 9, 2020

The Honorable Gene Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro,

The Government Accountability Office's (GAO) short technical paper, "Science & Tech Spotlight: Contact Tracing Apps,"<sup>1</sup> has generated additional questions that we are interested in pursuing. Specifically, we understand that contact tracing applications (apps) are a relatively new technology that can help reduce transmission rates for highly infectious diseases like COVID-19 by rapidly identifying and notifying people who may have been in contact with infected individuals.

In the U.S., contact tracing apps have primarily been offered by states. Not much is known about the challenges various states may be facing in implementing the use of these technologies. Challenges that may reduce the effectiveness of these technologies include low adoption rates, testing delays, privacy concerns, and interoperability of the apps. We are also interested in the relationship between testing and state contact tracing programs. Further, it has been brought to our attention that some countries have successfully deployed these apps. We are interested in knowing what lessons we can learn from those countries.

Given our Committee's interest in contact tracing apps as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response, we request that GAO conduct a technology assessment to address the following questions:

1. What current and emerging app technologies are available for contact tracing in the United States and abroad, and what are potential benefits of their use?

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<sup>1</sup>GAO, *Science & Tech Spotlight: Contact Tracing Apps*, GAO-20-666SP (Washington, D.C.: July 28, 2020).

2. What lessons can be learned from contact tracing programs and technologies used in other countries, including how they address privacy concerns?
3. What challenges affect the development, implementation, and use of contact tracing apps, such as privacy and testing turnaround times? What policy options could address challenges to the increased use of contact tracing apps?

We believe that it is essential for Congress to have answers to these questions if we are to be able to fulfill our oversight responsibility on this matter. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Alan Slobodin of the Minority Committee Staff at (202) 225-3641.

Sincerely,



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Greg Walden  
Republican Leader  
Committee on Energy and Commerce



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Michael Burgess  
Republican Leader  
Subcommittee on Health



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Brett Guthrie  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Oversight and  
Investigations