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December 23, 2024

The Honorable Andrew Garbarino
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Garbarino:

Thank you for your letter to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Mandy K. Cohen, MD, MPH, and me regarding the petitions to include autoimmune and cardiovascular as World Trade Center (WTC) Health Program (the Program) covered conditions.

The WTC Health Program is committed to ensuring that each petition receives a timely, thorough, and scientifically sound review to meet our obligations to responders and survivors and that we are thoughtful stewards of the Program's resources. In recent years, the available scientific literature related to 9/11-exposed populations has substantially expanded. This literature provides valuable insights for our scientific evaluations of petitions; however, it also significantly increases the complexity of those petition evaluations compared to previously adjudicated petitions.

The growing complexity of these petition evaluations has led the Program to revise its *Policy and Procedures for Adding Non-Cancer Conditions to the List of WTC-Related Health Conditions (P&P)* to clarify the evaluation process. The James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act of 2010, as amended, requires that the WTC Health Program's Scientific/Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) review any substantive amendments to the *P&P*. These factors have delayed the review of valid petitions, including the autoimmune and cardiovascular petitions discussed in your letter.

I am pleased to report that significant progress is being made. Following consultation with the STAC, the final version of the *P&P* was published on October 18, 2024, on the WTC Health Program's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/wtc/policies.html>. The improvements to the *P&P* have allowed for more efficient and timely review of valid petitions. The Program is working diligently to process petitions and expects to have completed the review of the cardiovascular and autoimmune petitions by the end of the first quarter of calendar year 2025.

Page 2 - The Honorable Andrew Garbarino

Thank you again for your letter about this important issue. Resolving the delay in determining petitions is a priority for CDC, and I appreciate your support and that of Congress overall. If you have further questions, please have your staff contact Jeff Reczek in our CDC Washington Office at (202) 245-0600 or JReczek@cdc.gov.

Sincerely,

John Howard, M.D.
Administrator
World Trade Center Health Program

cc:

The Honorable Anthony D'Esposito
The Honorable Dan Goldman
The Honorable Jerry Nadler