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# Wastewater Sampling/COVID-19: U.S. Energy and Commerce Committee Ranking Minority Members Letter to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency/Center for Disease Control and Prevention

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Ranking U.S. Energy and Commerce Committee (“Committee”) Members (i.e., Minority) sent August 12th letters addressing questions about the potential ability of wastewater sampling to detect COVID-19.

The letters were sent to the Director of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) and Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”).

The letters were authored by:

- Congressman Greg Walden
- Congressman Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
- Congressman John Shimkus
- Congressman Brett Guthrie

The letters cite a report released in June by the Minority Members of the Committee that examined COVID-19 testing and surveillance in the United States. Referenced in the report are recommendations that were put forth for consideration “in order to improve “COVID-19 testing and surveillance in the U.S.”

The letters cite as an example of a recommendation found in the report:

... sampling wastewater in wastewater systems to detect whether there is a virus in a community because “[v]iral RNA fragments – part of a large molecule (ribonucleic acid), which, like DNA, are considered the building blocks of life – are present in the feces, and can be used to identify communities with COVID-19, whether individuals have symptoms of the illness or not.

This approach is described as a sentinel system that tests wastewater instead of people. The advantage cited is the possibility of preserving testing supplies and still be able to detect the presence of the disease in the population.

Because of the significant percentage of people who may be asymptomatic, to detect prevalence of the virus in the community is deemed an additional advantage.

The letters further describe the concept of wastewater epidemiology and its prior uses to address other issues.

A copy of the CDC letter can be downloaded [here](#) and the EPA letter [here](#).