

JERROLD NADLER
8TH DISTRICT, New York

REPLY TO:

☐ WASHINGTON OFFICE:
109 CANNON BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5635

☐ DISTRICT OFFICE:
11 BEACH STREET
SUITE 910
NEW YORK, NY 10012
(212) 334-2207

☐ DISTRICT OFFICE:
532 NEPTUNE AVENUE
BROOKLYN, NY 11224
(718) 373-3198

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

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SUBCOMMITTEES:

COMMERCIAL AND
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW
COURTS AND
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

April 12, 1996

The Honorable Donna E. Shalala
Secretary of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Shalala:

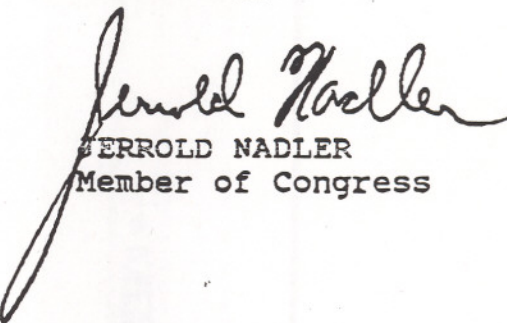
A very serious charge has been made by author Hillary Johnson that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have covered up the existence of a significant public health issue: Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). Ms. Johnson has asserted in her recent book, *Osler's Web*, as well as in interviews and in public appearances on Good Morning America and in other major venues, that CFS is a real disease caused by a real pathogen, but that the CDC has attempted to portray CFS as a psychosomatic illness instead. She alleges that CFS is a major, debilitating illness with enormous public health consequences. In over 720 pages, based upon 9 years of investigation, she sets out to prove that CFS is an infectious disease that attacks the brain and leaves its victims totally devastated.

Ms. Johnson asserts that there already exists ample clinical and epidemiological evidence to support her conclusion, but CDC is hide-bound in its determination to ignore this evidence -- at the public's peril. She believes that CDC refuses to draw the obvious conclusion from this evidence because a handful of long-time CDC senior scientists and administrators have invested their reputations in the hypothesis that CFS is not a real illness. She charges that CDC scientists and other scientists who have attempted to draw the same conclusions that she has drawn have been ostracized and denied federal funding.

This matter was initially brought to my attention because of Ms. Johnson's assertion that there is evidence that CFS is an immunological disease with many of the same characteristics as AIDS. In fact, in chapter 33 of her book she calls CFS "HIV-Negative AIDS." In chapter 27, (pp. 492-493), Ms. Johnson briefly discusses research regarding the possibility that the herpesvirus HHV-6 may be the causative agent or a contributing player in the development and symptoms of CFS. In Chapter 33, she reports that HHV-6 may be involved as a precipitating factor in other immunological illnesses, including AIDS.

Because of the implications for public health if Ms. Johnson's assertions prove to be true and because of their serious impact upon the public's confidence in the CDC, Ms. Johnson's allegations about CFS deserve the most immediate and serious attention. I ask that you personally look into this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ferrol Nadler". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

FERROL NADLER
Member of Congress