

February x, 2022

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro, Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Granger and Vice Chairman Shelby,

Thank you for your leadership in championing support for public health. On behalf of the Vector-Borne Disease Network, we the undersigned organizations write to express our strong support for efforts related to vector-borne diseases (VBD) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and urge you to complete the fiscal year (FY) 2022 appropriations process. As part of this, we ask you to include at least the House-passed spending level of **\$10.5 billion for the CDC in any final FY 2022 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill.**

The Vector-Borne Disease Network is a stakeholder group of non-profit organizations led by the Entomological Society of America (ESA) that aims to reduce human and animal suffering caused by arthropod disease vectors. Many notorious public health threats, such as Lyme disease, Zika virus, malaria, and West Nile virus, are transmitted by arthropod vectors like ticks and mosquitoes. Between 2004 and 2016, reported human disease cases in the U.S. resulting from bites from arthropod vectors tripled.¹ Meanwhile, nine new pathogens spread by ticks and mosquitoes were discovered or introduced in that same timeframe. Disease vectors also pose significant threats to both livestock and companion animals. Because both the underlying causes of and potential solutions for these trends are varying and complex, robust and dedicated funding for addressing challenges in VBD is needed now more than ever.

The past two years have demonstrated the importance of public health preparedness, and no agency is more central to that than the CDC. With more people spending time outside over the last two years to safely distance from friends and family in order to reduce the risk of Covid-19 exposure, it increases the risk of exposure to other diseases spread by insects and arthropods like ticks and mosquitoes if individuals don't take appropriate steps to protect themselves. While much attention has been focused on the pandemic, Arizona, for example, experienced the worst outbreak of West Nile virus in U.S. history this year with over 1,500 cases and 110 deaths.²

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/vector-borne/index.html>

² <http://outbreaknewstoday.com/arizona-reports-more-than-1500-total-west-nile-virus-cases-in-2021/>

The **CDC Regional Centers of Excellence (COE) in Vector-Borne Diseases** were created with emergency Congressional funding following the Zika outbreak. These centers play a novel and critical role in the coordination between academic institutions and state and local departments of health to ensure research findings and information are getting out into the community more rapidly, support surveillance efforts, and promote outreach and education. Since their creation in 2016, the five COEs around the U.S. have produced more than 340 peer-reviewed publications, trained more than 600 students, and supported more than 8000 professionals trained in practical vector management techniques.

The COE program was reauthorized through the *Kay Hagan TICK Act* in 2019, for which the VBDN is very grateful, and the \$15 million in the House-passed FY 2022 appropriations would ensure the continuation of at least five COEs across the country. As part of this, we encourage you to support **the \$15 million increase proposed in the House for the CDC “to address the steady increase in the incidence of vector-borne disease and to sustain the Regional Centers of Excellence program, including State-level surveillance and research being conducted by partners.”**³

CDC is the first line of defense for our nation’s health, safety, and security, and it is crucial that the agency has the resources it needs to protect Americans from serious threats like VBD. On behalf of our coalition of stakeholders invested in the mission to reduce the ongoing as well as emerging threats posed by ticks, mosquitoes, and other arthropod vectors, we thank you for your commitment to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

³ <https://www.congress.gov/117/crpt/hrpt96/CRPT-117hrpt96.pdf>