



VECTOR-BORNE
DISEASE NETWORK

March 21, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin, Ranking Member Capito, Chairman Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro,

On behalf of the Vector-Borne Disease Network (VBDN), we the undersigned organizations write to express our appreciation of strong, bipartisan and bicameral support for addressing vector-borne diseases (VBD) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the fiscal year (FY) 2023 Omnibus. The boost in funding enables the CDC to expand on the success of their existing **CDC Regional Centers of Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases** and increase coverage across the nation through the creation of several new training and evaluation centers focused on vector-borne disease education and outreach coordination between universities and the public health community.

The VBDN is a stakeholder group of nonprofit 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. **We urge you to provide at least \$11.581 billion for CDC in the fiscal year (FY) 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bills.** We also ask that you provide, within the National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Disease (NCEZID), **at least \$62.603 million in funding for Vector-Borne Diseases (VBD), including at least \$26.0 million for Lyme disease**, which is the same as the FY 2023 enacted level. We also ask for **\$34.2 million in NCEZID for the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) grant program** to support states' work on VBD.

The past three years have repeatedly demonstrated the importance of public health preparedness, and no agency is more central to that than the CDC. This community is grateful for strong Congressional support for VBD programs in recent years and believe that ongoing investments in this area are crucial for combatting the escalating burden of VBD and supporting early detection for future pandemics. This investment is perhaps now more important than ever before, as the last three years have forced so

many state and local agencies to reappropriate funding and personnel time to addressing COVID-19 rather than undertaking vector surveillance and management. The challenge posed by VBDs only continues to grow with time, with Lyme disease continuing to spread into places it has not previously been detected, and emerging diseases like Heartland virus and Bourbon virus being detected in the mid-Atlantic region in addition to the Midwest and South. Fortunately, the CDC runs critical programs to help address these challenges at the regional, state, and local levels.

CDC Regional Centers of Excellence (COE) in Vector-Borne Diseases: In 2022, four COEs were reauthorized following a competition. These centers play a unique and critical role in the coordination between academic institutions and state and local health departments to accelerate dissemination of research findings and information into the communities, support surveillance efforts, and promote outreach and education. Building on the success of the COE model, the CDC created an expansion of this program called Training and Evaluation Centers (TEC). The TEC program will help continue to grow those relationships focused on translating and disseminating research findings to the public health community. The coalition is highly appreciative of the additional \$8 million which will be used to help fund the TECS and increase coverage of these partnerships across the U.S. and Caribbean. The VBDN's request for FY 2024 is **at least level funding of \$62.603 million**, including **\$26.0 million for Lyme disease**, for the CDC's Division of Vector-Borne Diseases (DVBD), for a total of **\$88.603 million**.

CDC Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) grant program: This funding is critical for efforts related to the surveillance, detection, response, and prevention of infectious diseases, including VBD. In 2022 the CDC's DVBD received requests for nearly \$32 million from the state departments of health for VBD through the ELC program. However, the Division was only able to support \$16.2 million, about half of the amount requested to address VBD across the nation at the state and county level. The *Kay Hagan TICK Act* authorized an additional \$20 million over the level in FY 2019, which was \$14.2 million. The VBDN request for FY 2024 is **\$34.2 million** in ELC funding for VBD to fulfill the vision of the *Kay Hagan Tick Act* and help meet the needs of states across the U.S.

Data Modernization: The VBDN expresses our appreciation for the strong, ongoing Congressional support for data modernization at the CDC in recent years through annual appropriations as well as the *CARES Act* and *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021*. Sustained support for data infrastructure will be critical to modernize healthcare in this nation as public health data currently remains siloed from other healthcare data. Connecting public health labs to other parts of the health care system is essential to our ability to respond to a detected outbreak in real time. As diseases and insects do not respect county, state, or territorial boundaries, a robust data infrastructure will be the only way to meaningfully protect the U.S. against future biological threats. This funding will lead to better detection of emerging outbreaks of all kinds, including vector-borne diseases, and we thank you for your support. The VBDN requests **\$340 million** in FY 2024 funding for CDC's Data Modernization Initiative (DMI) to carry out this important function.

As part of this data modernization effort, \$10 million is requested to continue and grow support for an internet-based program called VectorSurv that enhances capacity for mosquito control activities and expands nationwide surveillance of vector-borne disease. This effort currently supports 14 states and the U.S.-affiliated Pacific islands for coordinated surveillance, control, and abatement activities as authorized through the SMASH provisions in the All-Hazards Preparedness and Advancing Innovation Act of 2019 (P.L. 116-22).

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 and emerging threats posed by ticks, mosquitoes, and other arthropod vectors, we thank you for your commitment to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

American Mosquito Control Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
Anastasia Mosquito Control District
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Delta Mosquito & Vector Control District
Entomological Society of America
Lee County Mosquito Control district
Midwest Center of Excellence for Vector-Borne Disease
Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California
New Jersey Mosquito Control Association
New Jersey State Mosquito Control Commission
Northeast Regional Center for Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases
Pacific Southwest Center of Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases
Society for Vector Ecology
Southeastern Center of Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Institute for Genome Biology
US Biologic, Inc.