

March 18, 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,

On behalf of the Vector-Borne Disease Network (VBDN), we write to express our gratitude for **completing the fiscal year (FY) 2022 appropriations process**. We are especially appreciative of the increased funding to address vector-borne diseases (VBD) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The VBDN 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. Earlier this year, in one community park in Pennsylvania, 92% of the ticks tested were found to be carrying Powassan virus,¹ a tick-borne disease with no cure which was responsible for the untimely death of former Senator Kay Hagan. The highest levels previously detected in one location was around 25% positivity. More research needs to be done, but particularly in the Northeast and Midwest where the black-legged tick – or deer tick – which spread this virus are most abundant, this is a worrying discovery. And just last week, it was reported that Heartland virus, another dangerous but not well-studied VBD, has been detected among lone star ticks in Georgia.² The challenge posed by VBDs only continues to grow with time.

We are very appreciative of the **\$12 million** to continue the funding for the **CDC Regional Centers of Excellence (COE) in Vector-Borne Diseases**, which was reauthorized through the *Kay Hagan Tick Act* in 2019. These centers were created with emergency Congressional funding following the Zika outbreak but only funded for five years. In that time, 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. 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.

¹ <https://www.wesa.fm/environment-energy/2022-02-05/rare-but-potentially-deadly-deer-tick-virus-found-at-high-levels-at-a-clearfield-county-park>

² <https://www.wsbvtv.com/news/local/study-reveals-deadly-new-virus-is-circulating-among-ticks-georgia/3DIZSKUN2RA53EL2LIOMJGPK5I/>

We also thank Congress for the **\$4.5 million** boost to the **Lyme disease** line at the CDC. Our awareness of the threat posed by ticks, including but not limited to Lyme disease, increases as the amount of surveillance increases. Surveillance and education are the two best ways to help protect communities, and the VBDN appreciates the additional funding to support this critical work.

Thank you again for completing the FY 2022 appropriations, and for Congress's continued support for research and resources to protect domestic public health.

Sincerely,

American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Mosquito Control Association
American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene
Anastasia Mosquito Control District
Associated Executives of Mosquito Control Work in NJ
CDC Southeastern Center of Excellence in Vector Borne Diseases
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Delta Mosquito & Vector Control District
Entomological Society of America
Georgia Mosquito Control Association
The Infectious Disease Institute at The Ohio State University
Lee County Mosquito Control District
Midwest Center of Excellence for Vector-Borne Disease
Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California
National Environmental Health Association
New Jersey Mosquito Control Association
New Jersey State Mosquito Control Commission
North Carolina Mosquito and Vector Control Association
Northwest Mosquito and Vector Control Association
Northeast Regional Center for Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases
Pacific Southwest Center of Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases
Puerto Rico Vector Control Unit
Society for Vector Ecology
Tulsa Health Department
The University of Georgia, Cooperative Extension Service
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
University of Nebraska
University of Rhode Island TickEncounter Resource Center
US Biologic
Valent Biosciences
Western Gulf Center of Excellence in Vector-borne Diseases