

9 September 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole, Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins, Vice-Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Chairwoman
Senate Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, & Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt, Chairman
U.S. House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, & Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Chairman Cole, Vice-Chairwoman Collins, Ranking Member DeLauro;
Subcommittee Chairwoman Baldwin, Subcommittee Chairman Aderholt, and Subcommittee Ranking
Member Moore Capito:

We write to call your attention to the recent outbreaks of mosquito-borne disease. Currently, mosquito control agencies are battling Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in New England. There are locally transmitted cases of Dengue virus in Florida. West Nile virus (WNV) cases are on the rise throughout the country. And there is rising concern over the emergence of a new virus, Oropouche virus (OROV) within the continental U.S. and its Territories.

Our Organizations represent entomologists, as well as mosquito and vector control professionals throughout the United States. The mission of each mosquito and vector control professional is to enhance health and quality of life through the suppression of vector-transmitted diseases and the reduction of mosquitoes and other public health pests. The nation's mosquito control professionals are on the frontlines, protecting humans and wildlife from diseases transmitted by the world's most dangerous animal – the mosquito. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has warned for years that without improved mosquito control tools, funding and capabilities, we risk the increasing emergence and spread of endemic and exotic vector-borne diseases, such as what we're witnessing this summer.

Millions of Americans are at an ever-increasing risk to these infections and without the proper tools to understand and slow the spread of these viruses, human cases are inevitable. As we're seeing in New England, once infected adult mosquitoes are prevalent in an area and people are sick or dying from disease, we have only one effective tool remaining – wide area pesticide applications via trucks and aircraft. With the proper infrastructure and tools in hand, many of these cases can be prevented. For these reasons, we have advocated for appropriations authorized in the permanent provisions of the Strengthening Mosquito Abatement for Safety and Health (SMASH) Act and the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness (PAPHA) Act, as well as reauthorization of expiring provisions of the Act.

While some funding is provided through the Centers for Disease Control, additional funds are necessary to develop and improve surveillance, early detection, and rapid response capabilities that can be highly targeted, thereby reducing the need for wide area applications.

We urge you to provide funding for a crucial initiative that could significantly improve public health in our nation. These funds would provide an additional \$10 million in appropriations in the Fiscal Year 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act to establish a nationwide database for mosquito monitoring, disease surveillance, and pesticide reporting. This funding would be added to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Vector-Borne Diseases account through the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity program. This investment in data modernization will enable surveillance, early detection and targeted, rapid response to mosquito-borne illnesses and enhance pesticide risk assessments, potentially saving countless lives and resources.

It is important to understand that Massachusetts, and many states, may have well-developed surveillance systems; however, there can be huge gaps in our data. Many towns within Massachusetts that are in critical risk and high risk areas are not members of a mosquito control district, largely due to absent funding mechanisms and a lack of resources. The initial EEE human case in MA was the first indication of EEE disease presence in the affected town. At that point, the only available response is large scale applications of pesticide via truck ULV foggers. For this reason, we support the CDC's goal of data modernization through a comprehensive nationwide surveillance database that tracks and predicts vector-borne disease outbreaks. VectorSurv is an internet-based program currently used by 27 states and territories to track mosquitoes, diseases, and pesticide applications. The expansion and utilization of VectorSurv will require no less than \$10 million in ELC funds that will be used to coordinate with states, mosquito control districts, universities, and other federal partners. This program would enhance our capacity to expand nationwide surveillance of vector-borne diseases and potentially provide early warnings for towns that need that data.

We also support the use of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) for public health and safety programs. Use of this technology allows mosquito and vector control professionals to target disease-bearing mosquito populations while they are in remote locations and before they threaten public health. We are concerned that bills introduced in this legislative session, as well as amendments added to the Defense Authorization Act are too restrictive in limiting the use of UAS for public health and vector control purposes. We request that any legislation concerning this subject matter recognize the legitimate use of UAS by vector control and encourage Congressional support for using this new technology that is critical for targeting applications outside of residential and other high traffic areas and reducing the time and effort needed to treat these often remote, difficult to access habitats. Specifically, H.R. 2864 (and the language of this bill incorporated into the Defense Authorization Act) should be amended to allow public safety and public health agencies reasonable accommodations to continue using drones produced by any manufacturer approved by the FAA to monitor and control mosquitoes.

We have full confidence that under your leadership and with a bipartisan commitment to the American people, we can enact legislation that supports proactive prevention of mosquito-borne disease.

Thank you for considering our requests. We look forward to working with you to bring an end to future mosquito-borne disease outbreaks.

Sincerely,

American Mosquito Control Association
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment
Beaufort County Mosquito Control (South Carolina)
Benton County Mosquito Control District (Washington)
Berkshire Mosquito Control Project (Massachusetts)
Bristol Mosquito Control Project (Massachusetts)
Cape Cod Mosquito Control Project (Massachusetts)
Canyon County Mosquito Abatement District (Idaho)
Clark County Mosquito Control District (Washington)
Florida Keys Mosquito Control District (Florida)
Franklin County Mosquito Control District (Washington)
Gem County Mosquito Abatement District (Idaho)
Grant County Mosquito Control District No. 1, (Washington)
Iberia Parish Mosquito Abatement District (Louisiana)
Leavenworth Mosquito Control, District #2 (Washington)
New Jersey Mosquito Control Association (New Jersey)
New Jersey State Mosquito Control Commission (New Jersey)
North Carolina Mosquito and Vector Control Association (North Carolina)
North Short Mosquito Abatement District (Illinois)
Northeastern Mosquito Control Association (ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, PA)
Northwest Mosquito and Vector Control Association (ID, OR, WA)
Northwest Mosquito and Vector Control District (California)
Osceola Mosquito Control District (Florida)
Otter Creek Watershed Insect Control District (Vermont)
Payette County Mosquito Abatement District (Idaho)
Sacramento-Yolo Mosquito and Vector Control District (California)
Southlake Mosquito Abatement District (Illinois)
Toledo Area Sanitary District (Ohio)
Yakima Mosquito Control District (Washington)