VECTOR-BORNE
DISEASE NETWORK

March 27, 2024

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,

The Vector-Borne Disease Network (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) 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bills**.

More specific to the VBDN's interest in vector-borne diseases, we ask that you provide, within the National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Disease (NCEZID), ***at least* $114.603 million in funding for the Division of Vector-Borne Diseases (DVBD).** Included within this ask is sustained funding for *Lyme disease*, a requested increase in support for the *Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC)* program to support states' work on vector-borne diseases (VBD), and sustained funding to continue to support the *CDC regional Centers of Excellence on Vector-Borne Diseases (COEs)* as well as the *new Training and Evaluation Centers (TECs)***.** Our justification is explained below.

We are very appreciative of the FY 2024 funding of $90.6 million in the proposed appropriations for the DVBD. Earlier this year, *The National Public Health Strategy to Prevent and Control Vector-Borne Diseases in People* was delivered to Congress, fulfilling a key requirement of the *Kay Hagan Tick Act*. However, the strategy is just the beginning. To achieve the objectives laid out in the strategy, such as reducing the number of cases of Lyme disease and West Nile virus neuroinvasive disease, the community of scientists and vector management professionals need the resources and infrastructure to understand what diseases are circulating where and respond accordingly.

The 10 cases of locally transmitted malaria in 2023, the first in 20 years in the U.S., and the 182 locally transmitted cases of dengue just in Florida alone, demonstrate that the need is growing more urgently.

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, a growing burden from alpha-gal syndrome, 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) and Training and Evaluation Centers (TEC) in Vector-Borne Diseases: In 2022, four COEs were reauthorized following a competition. These centers, covering *New England, the Southeast, the Midwest, and the Southwest*, 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, education, and workforce development.

Building on the success of the COE model, the CDC created an expansion of this program called TECs in 2023. The TEC program is continuing to grow those relationships focused on translating and disseminating research findings to the public health community. These new TECs are creating hub and spokes in *the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic, Southern Delta, Rockies, and Caribbean/Pacific islands*. The VBDN is highly appreciative of the additional funding, which is being used to help fund the TECS and has increased geographic coverage and partnerships across the U.S., Caribbean, and Pacific islands.

CDC Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) grant program: ELC funding is critical for efforts related to the surveillance, detection, response, and prevention of infectious diseases, including VBD. In 2023 the CDC's DVBD received requests for more than $31 million from the state departments of health for VBD through the ELC program. However, the Division was only able to support $17 million using a mix of FY 2023 appropriated ELC funds and rollover funds, a little more than half of the amount needed.

The *Kay Hagan TICK Act* authorized an additional $20 million over the level in FY 2019, which was $10.0 million at that time, and thus would be **$30.0 million** total for FY 2025. So far, only about $6 million of that $20 million authorized increase has been appropriated if the current proposed FY 2024 level is enacted.

Another program that is helping bring together surveillance and prevention through data modernization efforts, breaking down the silos between healthcare providers and public health, is an internet-based program and database called VectorSurv. This program enhances capacity for mosquito control activities and expands nationwide surveillance of vector-borne disease. VectorSurv currently supports 14 states and the U.S.-affiliated Pacific islands for coordinated surveillance, control, and abatement activities which fit within the $100 million authorized increase through the *Strengthening Mosquito Abatement for Safety and Health (SMASH)* provisions in the *All-Hazards Preparedness and Advancing Innovation Act of 2019* (P.L. 116-22). The VBDN requests an additional **$10 million** through ELC funding to continue and grow support and engagement with VectorSurv.

Data Modernization: The VBDN expresses our appreciation for the strong, ongoing Congressional support for data modernization at the CDC in recent years. 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 2025 funding for CDC's Public Health Data Modernization to carry out this important function, consistent with last year's request.

In total, the VBDN request for FY 2025 is ***at least* $114.603 million** for the CDC's Division of Vector-Borne Diseases (DVBD). Included within this is a request for an increase of $10.0 million in ELC funding for VectorSurv, as well as $14 million more for VBD ELC support to fulfill the vision of the *Kay Hagan Tick Act,* for a total of **$87.603 million for the VBD line**, and ***at least* $27.0 million for Lyme disease**. This would help support the collaborative efforts of more than a dozen federal agencies efforts to fulfill the vision laid out in the National Strategy on VBD and help meet the needs of states across the U.S.

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 Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Mosquito Control Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
Anastasia Mosquito Control District
The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Collier Mosquito Control District
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Delta Mosquito & Vector Control District
Entomological Society of America
Georgia Mosquito Control Association
Lee County Mosquito Control District
Michigan Mosquito Control Association
Midwest Center of Excellence for Vector-Borne Disease
Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California
National Environmental Health Association
New England Center of Excellence in Vector-borne Disease (NEWVEC)
New Jersey Mosquito Control Association
New Jersey State Mosquito Control Commission
Northeast Regional Center for Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases
North Carolina Mosquito and Vector Control Association
Pacific Southwest Center of Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases
Puerto Rico Vector Control Unit
Rockies and High Plains VEctor-borne diseases Center (RaHP VEC)
Salt Lake City Mosquito Abatement District
Society for Vector Ecology
Southeastern Center of Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases
Tropical Island Training and Evaluation Center for Vector Borne Disease
US Biologic, Inc.
Utah Mosquito Abatement Association

VectorED Network Training and Evaluation Center for Vector-borne Diseases