



June 11, 2020

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairman
LHHS Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
LHHS Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Blunt,

We are writing today to express our strong support for expanding efforts around Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Specifically, we are requesting \$20 million in funding for ongoing Lyme disease and tick-borne illnesses work, as well as \$30 million for the Kay Hagan Tick Act, including \$10 million for Centers of Excellence and \$20 million for States and Tribal Organizations Grants, in FY2022. This investment will equip the CDC to address the serious public health threat of Lyme disease through expanded prevention and surveillance efforts.

As the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Tick-Borne Disease Working Group reported in December 2018, tick-borne diseases are a serious public health threat. There are an estimated 476,000 cases of Lyme disease in the United States annually, which, as the recently released report points out, is significantly higher than previously thought. Nationally these cases lead to an estimated \$1.3 billion in direct medical costs each year. Instances of Lyme disease have increased more than 300% in Northeastern states and by 250% in North-Central states over the last 25 years. Acknowledging this dramatic increase, the report highlights priorities for research and practice in wide-ranging areas including epidemiology, prevention, diagnosis, treatment, access to care, and patient outcomes.

Despite the rising incidence and costs of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses like Powassan, research into strategies for preventing, diagnosing, treating, and surveilling these diseases has historically been underfunded. The CDC invests only \$191 for each new Lyme disease case, despite the high health care costs endured by many individuals with Lyme and other tick-borne diseases and our health care system as a whole.

The level of funding we are requesting for FY2022 would be highly beneficial in addressing the challenges outlined by the Tick-Borne Disease Working Group, including the

urgent, unmet needs of patients affected by Lyme disease and those at high risk for developing tick-borne illnesses. Increased funding would enable the CDC to expand underfunded programs in the area of prevention to identify and validate prevention and control methods, as well as to develop alternate surveillance techniques such as from medical records. Additional funding would also support research to improve diagnostics, especially those that incorporate new technologies more advanced than traditional antibody screening to improve early diagnosis and treatment.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this important public health issue.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate

/S/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.

ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.
United States Senate



EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senate