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Congress of the United States
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ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

August 4, 2023

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write to you to request an update on the canine Valley fever vaccine currently under review with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Code 1431.R0. We request that this vaccine receive full and fair consideration, and that you take into account the potential impact this may have on our Arizona constituents.

As you know, coccidioidomycosis, also known as Valley fever, is a fungal infection prevalent in the western United States, especially in Arizona. Microscopic fungal spores are found in the soil in affected areas, and when the soil is disturbed, individuals and canines are at risk of inhaling the spores. Symptoms of Valley fever can include cough, fever, muscle and joint pain, and other symptoms that mimic other common respiratory infections and illnesses, which can lead to a misdiagnosis. While many cases of Valley fever are mild, if left untreated, some cases can develop into severe fungal infections that spread to multiple organs and can be fatal for more susceptible populations.

According to the Arizona Department of Health Services, Arizona had almost 11,500 cases of Valley fever in 2021, an 85% increase from 2016.¹ These figures are troubling, especially since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that the actual number of cases are underreported nationwide.² While medical treatments are available, no vaccine is currently available that would allow our constituents to develop immunologic resistance to Valley fever and prevent the development of serious health conditions.

We are pleased to know that the USDA is currently reviewing a potential Valley fever vaccine for canines. Arizonans spend millions of dollars every year in treating their pets for Valley fever, and while a potential vaccine for canines would reduce out of pocket costs for our constituents, the

¹ Arizona Department of Health Services, Valley Fever – Data, Reports and Publications (2022), <https://www.azdhs.gov/preparedness/epidemiology-disease-control/valley-fever/index.php#data-reports-publications>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Valley Fever (Coccidioidomycosis) Statistics (2022) <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/coccidioidomycosis/statistics.html>

vaccine would be the first vaccine for any fungal infection and could help lead to further scientific advancements for a potential vaccine for humans.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter. We look forward to your response and hope you will give full and fair consideration to this potential vaccine.

Sincerely,



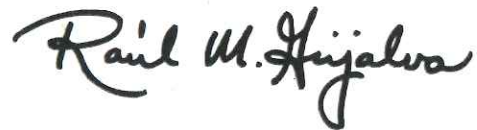
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