

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 4, 2015

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Senator Merkley:

As you prepare the FY 2016 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we request robust funding to proactively address the ongoing highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreak.

The first case of HPAI in the United States since 2004 was confirmed in December 2014. Since that time, HPAI has been detected in wild birds, as well as backyard and commercial flocks, in 18 states across the country. Although the virus poses minimal risk to human health, it has serious implications for U.S. poultry producers and is extremely infectious and fatal to poultry. Commercial poultry flocks across the country have been depopulated to control the spread of the virus, resulting in the loss of millions of birds to date.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), in partnership with the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and state and local agencies, has responded quickly to the avian influenza outbreak. The APHIS avian health program is responsible for avian influenza surveillance, reporting, and control efforts, as well as distributing indemnity payments to affected poultry producers. In recent weeks the number of confirmed HPAI cases has increased rapidly, and APHIS has ramped up its action in response, using significant resources to do so.

The President's original budget request for the APHIS avian health program was \$52 million for FY 2016, which is equal to the FY 2014 and FY 2015 enacted levels. Given the recent unforeseen increase in confirmed avian influenza cases and their rapid spread throughout the country since the President's FY 2016 budget request was released, we urge the Subcommittee or the Committee to make funding for the APHIS avian health program a very high priority in order to continue these critical avian influenza response measures in the next fiscal year. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Amy Klobuchar

Al Franken

Heidi Heitkamp

Joe Donnelly
Democrat

Mike F. Bunt

Bob Casey, Jr.

Mark R. Warner

W. Michael Bond

Chuck Grassley

Tom Carper

Jerry Belmont

Sheldon Brown

Chris Coons

John H. Coons

Frank

John S. Sununu