

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 15, 2020

The Honorable Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D.  
Director  
National Institutes of Health  
9000 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dr. Anthony Fauci  
Director  
National Institute of Allergy  
and Infectious Diseases  
5601 Fishers Lane  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dear Dr. Collins and Dr. Fauci:

We write today in support of proposed efforts through the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to better understand Coccidioidomycosis, more commonly known as Valley Fever.

It has come to our attention that in June 2020, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) Division of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases Council approved a Fiscal Year 2022 concept with \$6 million in first year funding for direct costs to “establish highly collaborative, multidisciplinary, research teams to conduct translational and clinical research for the improved diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of coccidioidomycosis.”

While we understand a concept conveys NIH’s interest in a topic and reflects early planning stages for initiatives, we also recognize that NIAID is in the process of considering whether to advance this concept, as well as the amount of funding to be dedicated to such an initiative. Accordingly, with the number of Valley Fever cases continuing to increase in recent years, combined with several University of California, San Francisco researchers estimating the total lifetime burden of Valley Fever cases in 2017 to be just shy of \$700 million,<sup>1</sup> we offer our strong support for this concept to move forward with appropriate funding to establish Valley Fever collaborative research centers.

As members of the Congressional Valley Fever Task Force, who represent some of the hotspots of Valley Fever in the American Southwest, we applaud these efforts, particularly since Valley Fever presents pneumonia-like symptoms that are similar to those of the novel coronavirus, which can result in misdiagnosis of both diseases and lead to improper treatment regimens. This makes the Valley Fever concept even more timely and important. While \$6 million in funding is a strong first step, we would not be surprised if you determined that a larger allocation is more appropriate to address this very important public health problem—something we would support if needed—as this concept is finalized.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, L., Ting, J., Lin, H., Shah, R., MacLean, M., Peterson, M. W., Stockamp, N., Libke, R., & Brown, P. (2019). The Rise of Valley Fever: Prevalence and Cost Burden of Coccidioidomycosis Infection in California. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16(7), 1113.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16071113>

Thank you for the work you and your teams are doing to develop therapies to help our constituents who are infected with Valley Fever fully recover and to develop a vaccine to help prevent our constituents from contracting this fungal disease in the first place.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



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KEVIN McCARTHY  
House Republican Leader  
23<sup>rd</sup> District of California



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DAVID SCHWEIKERT  
Member of Congress  
6<sup>th</sup> District of Arizona



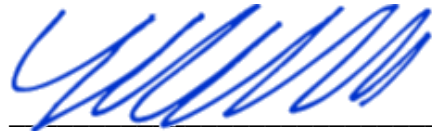
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Ken Calvert  
Member of Congress  
42<sup>nd</sup> District of California



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DEBBIE LESKO  
Member of Congress  
8<sup>th</sup> District of Arizona



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MIKE GARCIA  
Member of Congress  
25<sup>th</sup> District of California



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PAUL COOK  
Member of Congress  
8<sup>th</sup> District of California

**cc:** Dr. Dennis Dixon  
Chief  
Bacteriology and Mycology Branch  
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

Dr. Donna Love  
Mycology Program Officer  
Bacteriology and Mycology Branch  
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases