

January 13, 2020

The Honorable Jimmy Panetta
212 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: H.R. 5438, the End Valley Fever Now Act

Dear Congressman Panetta:

I write today on behalf of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors to express our support for H.R. 5438, the End Valley Fever Now Act.

Coccidioidomycosis, also known as Valley Fever, results from inhalation of fungal spores that lead to infection in the lungs. These spores can get into the air with dust when it is windy or when dirt is disturbed, so people who work in farming and construction are at greater risk of getting infected. And although most people who are exposed to the fungus never have the flu-like symptoms associated with the disease, approximately 5 to 10% of people who get Valley Fever will develop serious or long-term problems in their lungs. If the infection spreads to other parts of the body, it can be very serious and is sometimes fatal.

As you know, Valley Fever is a growing problem in Monterey County. Since 2017, over 600 county residents have been diagnosed with Valley Fever. In the three years prior to 2017, 144 residents were diagnosed. Even more alarming, the Monterey County Health Department has seen a larger than usual number of children being diagnosed with Valley Fever. In 2018, ten children were diagnosed with the disease, compared to three children from 2015 to 2017.

Monterey County Health Department has conducted Valley Fever education and training to local health care providers in an attempt to increase provider level of suspicion, which leads to earlier diagnosis and treatment, which can decrease the severity of the disease. However, local resources are extremely limited and are insufficient to maintain an effective outreach and education campaign. New federal funding as proposed by H.R. 5438 will support and expand on current efforts to increase awareness, testing, diagnosis and early treatment of this disease.

We greatly appreciate your support for the End Valley Fever Now Act, which would focus greater federal attention and resources to combatting this dangerous disease that is endemic to Monterey County.

Sincerely,

Chris Lopez
Chair, Board of Supervisors