The Honorable John Cornyn The Honorable Cory Booker

United States Senate United States Senate

Washington, D.C. 20002 Washington, D.C. 20002

The Honorable Mike Quigley The Honorable Fred Upton

United States House of Representatives United States House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515 Washington, D.C. 20515

September XX, 2020

Dear Senators Cornyn and Booker and Representatives Quigley and Upton:

We are writing to express our support for the Preventing Future Pandemics Act of 2020.

Pathogen spillover from wildlife hosts to people is increasing as they come into contact with wildlife through habitat encroachment and destruction, and the capture, trade, and breeding of live wildlife for human consumption. Markets trading and slaughtering live wildlife for meat have been the source of previous coronavirus pandemics, such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), and one such market is again understood to be the likely source of human exposure to the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. These markets and the associated commercial trade of wildlife create the perfect environment for zoonotic diseases to mutate, propagate, and spread to humans due to the large number of species confined in close proximity to each other. Animals in trade and at these markets experience extreme stress, vastly increasing potential to shed and transmit viruses over extended periods, a danger that is exacerbated by on-site slaughter or onward sales and distribution of the live animals.

We believe that among the most effective, practical, and cost-efficient ways to significantly reduce the risk of future zoonotic pandemics caused by viral spillover from wildlife to humans is to stop all commercial trade in terrestrial wildlife for human consumption. Rigorous enforcement of existing laws, regulations, and international treaties that deal with wildlife trade and markets is critical, but this is simply not enough. The conditions for viruses to emerge and be transmitted to humans exist in legal and sustainable trade and markets with common wildlife species as well as in markets where illegal and/or unsustainable trade occurs. A new global paradigm is needed that addresses both the illegal and legal trade in live wildlife if we are to avoid another pandemic such as the one we are experiencing today.

The Preventing Future Pandemics Act of 2020 would place our nation in a strong position to lead the global fight against future pandemics, both by setting the standard at home and through a number of strategies to work with the global community to create a safer future for all. The bill would take the important step of prohibiting the import to, export from, or sale within the United States of certain live terrestrial wildlife for the primary purpose of human consumption. It would call upon the State Department to work bilaterally, multilaterally, and through relevant international bodies to secure similar market closures by other countries, with special consideration for Indigenous Peoples and local communities that are dependent on wildlife consumption for food security. Critically, the legislation authorizes funding for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to provide technical and financial assistance to enable those communities that rely on consumption of wildlife for food security to develop and transition to alternative sources of protein and directs USAID to increase its activities in global health, biodiversity, and combating wildlife trafficking. The bill would also substantially increase resources for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to hire, train, and deploy new law enforcement officers to provide technical support and professional expertise in countries of highest concern for a flourishing illegal trade in at-risk species.

By closing the trade in terrestrial live wildlife for human consumption in the United States and working internationally to end this trade, we believe that the Preventing Future Pandemics Act of 2020 will reduce the risk for widespread outbreaks of zoonotic diseases. We support this legislation and look forward to working with you to secure its passage.

Sincerely,