November XX, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi

Speaker of the House

United States House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi,

As the end of 2020 quickly approaches, we urge you to include the bipartisan and bicameral Preventing Future Pandemics Act (S. 4749/H.R. 8433) in the next COVID relief package, or in any end-of-year must-pass legislation, including FY 2021 appropriations legislation or the National Defense Authorization Act. The COVID-19 pandemic has killed over 240,000 Americans so far and has upended our entire planet in less than one year. The Preventing Future Pandemics Act is highly pertinent to any COVID relief effort as it would be a crucial first step towards enabling the U.S. government to establish a unified response to this pandemic, and would also provide cogent global leadership in preventing future pandemics from occurring altogether.

Earlier this year, Dr. Anthony Fauci issued a stern warning about the dangers of wildlife trade and called on all nations to shut down their wildlife markets due to the high risk of zoonotic disease spillover from animals to people.[[1]](#footnote-1) The Preventing Future Pandemics Act—introduced by Senators Cornyn (R-TX) and Booker (D-NJ) and Representatives Quigley (D-Ill.) and Upton (R-Mich.)—takes the critical step of prohibiting the import, export, and sale of certain live wildlife for the primary purpose of human consumption as food or medicine in the United States, setting the standard for global action to protect against zoonotic disease pandemics.

The Preventing Future Pandemics Act also recognizes the urgent need for a global approach to emerging diseases and the threats they pose, and places the United States in a strong position to lead the fight against future pandemics through a number of diplomatic strategies to end the commercial trade of terrestrial wildlife, including markets, and associated wildlife trafficking operations. It provides critical resources to federal agencies like the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to advance our national wildlife anti-trafficking priorities, build global cooperation on conservation, and bolster current USAID initiatives to include assisting developing nations that rely on consumption of wildlife for food security to develop and transition to alternative sources of protein.

Congress has passed legislation that deals with the immediate consequences of COVID-19. However, it is also imperative to address our exploitation of wildlife and destruction of wildlife habitat, which are the root causes of this emerging zoonotic virus and others like it. Our reckless exploitation of the natural world has led to some of the worst epidemics and pandemics in the past 40 years, including HIV, SARS, avian flu, Ebola, Zika, and now COVID-19. The Preventing Future Pandemics Act recognizes that we must address and change those behaviors that are the most likely to result in the emergence of another pandemic, or else COVID-19 certainly will not be the last disease to devastate our society.

An unprecedented amount of federal money has been spent helping the American people weather the current crisis, and we are seeing the staggering financial toll that a health emergency can take. As we cope with the current circumstances, it is vital that we also consider how to prevent another pandemic. A small investment in prevention measures now could save the United States from having to spend additional trillions of dollars in the future. Congress should not only bolster the wellbeing of everyday people now, but should also help ensure our future health, economic, and fiscal security.

The current pandemic is a sobering demonstration of what happens as the natural world unravels. The Preventing Future Pandemics Act takes the most important first step towards resetting our relationship with the natural world and its wildlife in order to protect public health, our economy, and our natural resources. Therefore, we ask that you include this legislation in any end-of-year must-pass legislation.

Sincerely,

Center for Biological Diversity

GROUPS

1. Jackie Northam, *Calls Grow to Ban Wet Markets Amid Concerns Over Disease Spread*, NPR (April 16, 2020), *available at*: <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/04/16/835937420/calls-grow-to-ban-wet-markets> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)