

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 4, 2025

Mr. Gary Washington  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
212A Whitten Building  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Ms. Susan Collier Monarez  
Acting Director  
Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
395 E Street, SW,  
Suite 9100  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Acting Secretary Washington and Acting Director Monarez:

We write to request an immediate resumption of communications related to virus and disease communication, particularly influenza viruses like H5N1 Avian Influenza (bird flu).

On January 16<sup>th</sup> a commercial broiler flock in Accomack County returned presumptive positive results for bird flu, and on January 20<sup>th</sup>, the Metro Richmond Zoo announced positive cases of bird flu in two deceased cranes. This was subsequently confirmed by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the commercial broiler flock was depopulated and not allowed to enter the food supply chain. Bird flu outbreaks have also been detected at three poultry operations in the broader Delmarva region, reportedly impacting more than 500,000 chickens. And unfortunately, the risks are not limited to animals. According to the CDC, a total of 67 human cases of bird flu have been identified in the United States, with 66 occurring in 2024. Most infections have been clinically mild, but on January 5, 2025, Louisiana reported the first death in the U.S.

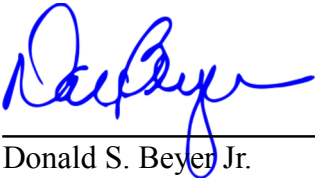
Virginia has a robust agricultural industry. According to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the industry has an economic impact of \$82.3 billion annually, provided more than 381,800 jobs in the Commonwealth, and \$43.8 billion in value-added impact. Cattle, dairy, and eggs are some of the top commodities that the state produces. While bird flu has largely been transmitted by wild birds and thus far mostly impacted Western states, particularly California, the recent cases are deeply concerning for potential impacts to Virginia's economy. The disease outbreak has already contributed to record egg prices.

We understand that the current response has been in a strong partnership with the States, with 15 states requesting personal protective equipment from the strategic national stockpile. We recognize the importance of the National Milk Testing Strategy to support and proactively detect cases, and that Virginia only just started to participate in surveillance. We do not want to short-change these efforts.

To avoid economic loss to the top private industry in the State, it is imperative that we prioritize biosecurity. Biosecurity includes strong state and federal partnerships, including

communications. Influenza viruses have potential to evolve, and A(H5N1) viruses are widely prevalent in wild birds. Therefore, continued comprehensive and coordinated, multisectoral communication and surveillance across public health and animal health for these viruses in wild birds, poultry, mammals, and people are critical to determine risk and response. Consequently, we request an immediate resumption of communications related to disease and viruses, like morbidity and mortality weekly reports, case and incidence dashboards, serology tests and studies, and surveillance research and reports, to ensure Virginia remains updated and biosecure.

Sincerely,



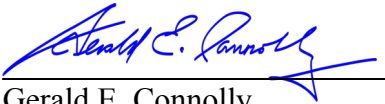
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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



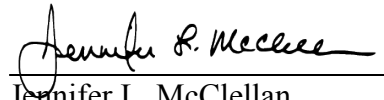
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Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
Member of Congress



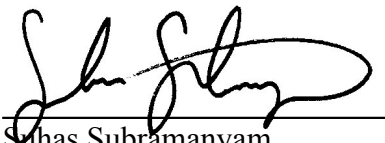
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Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



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Jennifer L. McClellan  
Member of Congress



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Suhas Subramanyam  
Member of Congress



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Eugene Simon Vindman  
Member of Congress