

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 17, 2025

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

We write to encourage the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to use its authorities provided by the Animal Health Protection Act (AHPA) to build and operate a domestic sterile fly facility to combat and eradicate New World Screwworm (NWS).

As you know, NWS is a devastating pest that causes serious and often deadly damage to livestock, wildlife, pets, and in rare cases, humans. While NWS has been eradicated from the United States for decades, recent detections in Mexico have raised significant concerns about the health and safety of our domestic livestock herd and the financial viability of our farmers and ranchers. When looking solely at the historical impact of NWS in Texas, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) estimates¹ that a contemporary outbreak would cost producers \$732 million per year and the Texas economy a loss of \$1.8 billion. Extrapolating those results to the states within the historic range of NWS pre-eradication, a contemporary outbreak of NWS could cost producers \$4.3 billion per year and cause a total economic loss of more than \$10.6 billion. This does not account for the possible expansion of NWS beyond the historic range.

Eradication of NWS is achieved through Sterile Insect Technique (SIT), in which sterile male flies are released aerially and then mate with wild female flies, resulting in no offspring. Through the Panama-United States Commission for the Eradication and Prevention of Screwworm (COPEG), APHIS and Panama's Ministry of Agriculture Development (MIDA) maintain the only NWS pupae sterilization facility in North America. The COPEG facility produces, sterilizes, and releases NWS in affected regions. Currently, COPEG only has the capacity to produce 100 million sterile flies each week. If the NWS outbreak continues moving north, upwards of 400-500 million sterile flies will be needed each week for eradication efforts.

We are greatly appreciative of USDA's \$21 million investment to retrofit a fruit fly facility in Metapa, Mexico for NWS sterile fly production. While the expected additional capacity of 60-100 million flies per week will be helpful in combatting NWS, more production must be brought online to eradicate the pest. A NWS sterile fly facility in the United States will be critical to ensuring the pest is pushed back below the longstanding biological barrier in Panama. Current estimates show that a domestic NWS sterile fly facility would cost \$300 million, with additional yearly operating costs expected. Thankfully, the AHPA (7 U.S.C. § 8301 et seq.) grants USDA the right to transfer funds as necessary for the arrest, control, eradication, or prevention of the spread of a pest or disease of livestock. We recognize the operational costs of a domestic facility would extend beyond the initial startup, and Congress stands ready to assist in long term operational funding.

¹ www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/nws-historical-economic-impact.pdf

Our producers cannot afford a NWS outbreak that decimates herds, causes financial losses, increases grocery prices, and threatens overall food security. Timing is of the essence – work on a domestic NWS sterile fly facility must begin immediately to ensure there is a location in the United States that can account for the transfer, irradiation, and dispersal of sterile flies. It will cost our producers and USDA far more to eradicate NWS in the U.S. than preventing its reentry. That is why we respectfully request you initiate an immediate transfer of funds to begin construction on a domestic NWS sterile fly facility.

Our country has fought NWS before, and we must do so again – our producers livelihoods depend on it. We appreciate your consideration of this matter and your continued leadership for American agriculture.

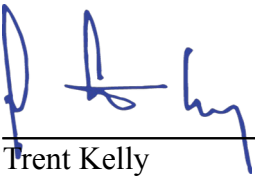
Sincerely,



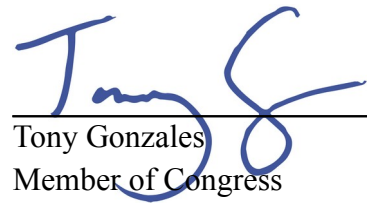
Glenn Thompson
Member of Congress
Chairman, House Committee
on Agriculture



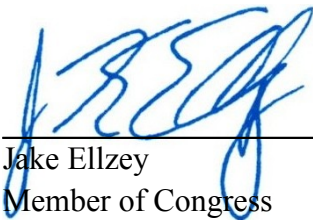
Daniel Webster
Member of Congress



Trent Kelly
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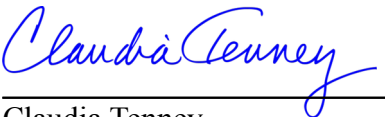
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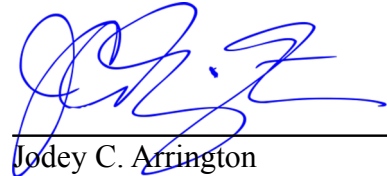
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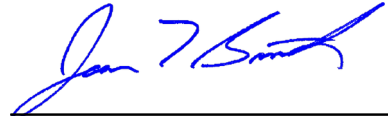
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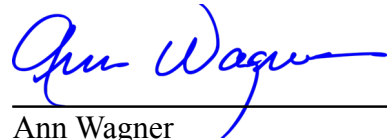
Vicente Gonzalez
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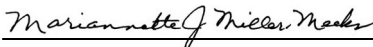
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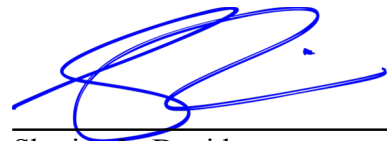
Henry Cuellar
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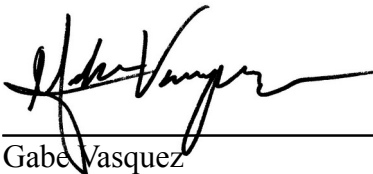
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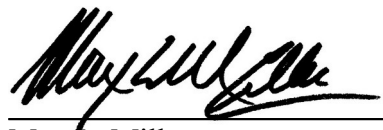
Michael Guest
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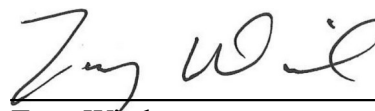
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Tony Wied
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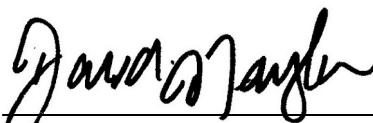
Cory Mills
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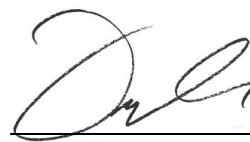
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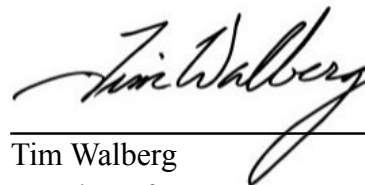
Darren Soto
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French Hill
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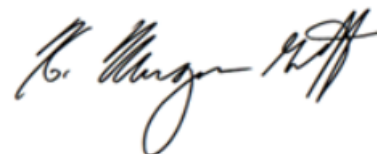
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