National Association *for* Biomedical Research

May 26, 2020

Open Letter to Senators Cory A. Booker and Lindsey O. Graham and Representatives Mike Quigley and Michael T. McCaul Regarding Your Requested Ban on the International Trade of Live Wildlife

The American biomedical research community is deeply concerned by the threat to human health posed by the evolving coronavirus pandemic and supports many of the steps taken by the government at all levels to help control the spread of disease and support economically devasted Americans. However, the National Association for Biomedical Research (NABR) urges you to reconsider the sweeping prohibition on international live wildlife trade that you requested in your April 8, 2020, letter to the WHO, OIE and FAO. This action would provide little defense against future novel widespread infections while doing dramatic damage to American biomedical research efforts.

The National Association for Biomedical Research (NABR) works to safeguard the future of biomedical research on behalf of its more than 350 public and private universities, medical and veterinary schools, teaching hospitals, voluntary health agencies, and professional societies. NABR is a national, nonprofit organization dedicated solely to advocating for sound public policy that recognizes the vital role animals play in biomedical research, pharmaceutical and biotech industries, and other animal research-related organizations.

Like Congress, NABR and its members are dedicated to preventing the spread of zoonotic diseases; many NABR members research ways to prevent and mitigate these diseases. However, the "wet markets" where novel human diseases are theorized to have originated, should not be confused with the legal importation of nonhuman primates for research. Nonhuman primates have been legally imported into the U.S. more than 50 years and these highly controlled animals pose no more threat to human health than imported and domestic animals that are already in the country.

Halting the importation of these species would eliminate not only government and private sector research projects, but it would very likely have unplanned impacts on the acquisition and breeding of research animals by the biomedical research community.

We ask you not to create unintended consequences for biomedical research which is working feverishly to develop a vaccine and treatments for COVID-19, for which nonhuman primates play a crucial role. Live animals have moved between countries successfully for decades under a heavily regulated and internationally monitored system that protects both human and animal health.

A broad ban on the existing legal trade in live animals will do little to protect Americans from another novel zoonotic disease outbreak. It will only do great harm by potentially preventing the acquisition of research animals that are necessary to preventing and mitigating the spread of infectious disease in both humans and animals.

If you have any questions or need additional information, NABR and the larger biomedical research community are more than happy to help craft science-based policies in this area that safeguards both human and animal health.

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National Association *for*
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Sincerely,

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