

January 21, 2022

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition & Forestry

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition & Forestry

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman,

On behalf of the millions of hunters and wildlife professionals our organizations represent, we write to request that the Committee take up and pass H.R. 5608, the *Chronic Wasting Disease Research and Management Act*, at the earliest possible moment in this session.

Chronic Wasting Disease, or CWD, is a crisis that threatens the future of hunting in North America and the health of deer, elk, and moose populations.

Years of bicameral, bipartisan interest has now culminated in H.R. 5608, which moved quickly through the House last year on voice vote in committee and an overwhelming 393-33 floor vote. This bill is the result of a partnership between Congressman Ron Kind and Congressman Glenn Thompson, who merged the several bills introduced in both chambers of the 116th Congress. Those bills – including bills sponsored by Senators Tester, Hoeven, and Hyde-Smith – sought the common purpose of joining Federal support with the ongoing efforts of states and tribes for the essential tasks of research and management.

H.R. 5608 complements Senator Barrasso's bill on CWD last Congress that was enacted in the America's Conservation Enhancement Act. That measure established a federal Chronic Wasting Disease Task Force supported by research into how CWD is transmitted. We thank you for the Senate's leadership on these two important aspects of the national CWD response, and urge you to now ensure states and tribes have access to effectively engage on this issue and with the federal task force.

CWD is an always-fatal disease affecting deer, elk, and moose that is spreading across the country and is now found in over half of the states. There are presently no treatments or vaccines available to treat animals infected with CWD, and research has already shown that both white-tailed and mule deer are experiencing negative population effects as a result of the disease. The lack of resources and comprehensive funding is leading to rising costs to agencies as they struggle to address the spread of the disease. Additionally, the resources that state and Tribal fish and wildlife agencies direct towards CWD are most often being diverted from other conservation efforts.

Research suggests that CWD prevalence is likely to suppress participation in hunting, which will further exacerbate the funding concerns. Through the "user pays - public benefits" American System of Conservation Funding, hunting provides critical funding for wildlife management through license sales and excise taxes on hunting equipment. Ungulate hunting is also a major contributor to the U.S. economy. According to the 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, big game like elk and deer attracted 9.2 million hunters – 80% of

all hunters – who spent 133 million days afield. Overall, hunters in the US spent \$25.6 billion on trips, equipment, licenses, and other items to support their hunting activities in 2016, much of it the result of big game hunting.

The threats posed by CWD to wildlife, hunting, and conservation are serious and sizeable enough that specific resources are needed to ensure a robust, coordinated national response. We estimate that the 28 states where CWD has been detected currently spend \$50 million per year collectively. The *Chronic Wasting Disease Research and Management Act* (H.R. 5608) authorizes the needed resources – up to \$70 million for state wildlife agencies, Tribes, and other partners, split equally between the essential tasks of research and management.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing need.

Sincerely,

American Woodcock Society
Archery Trade Association
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Boone and Crockett Club
Campfire Club of America
Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation
Conservation Force
Council to Advance Hunting and the
Shooting Sports
Delta Waterfowl
Houston Safari Club
Izaak Walton League of America
Masters of Foxhounds Association
Mule Deer Foundation
National Deer Association

National Rifle Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Wild Turkey Federation
National Wildlife Federation
North American Falconers Association
North American Grouse Partnership
Orion: The Hunter’s Institute
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Ruffed Grouse Society
The Wildlife Society
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
Partnership
Whitetails Unlimited
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Management Institute