March 13th, 2020

The Honorable Sanford Bishop Jr.
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA and Related Agencies
2362 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA and Related Agencies
2362 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

As members representing citrus-producing districts, we appreciate the opportunity to express our support for program funding in the FY 2021 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations bill to support the continued vitality of the $11 billion US citrus industry. We respectfully request that you consider the following programmatic requests:

1. **Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – Citrus Health Response Program**
   
   $61 million, equal to the FY20 enacted amount.

   This national program is critical for the pest and disease exclusion and eradication activities including those associated with Huanglongbing (HLB) and its vector the Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP). The survival of the citrus industry in the U.S. is dependent on this funding, which supports efforts in citrus-producing states to research, survey and combat both the pest and the disease.

2. **Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – Huanglongbing Multi-Agency Coordination Group**
   
   $8.5 million, equal to the FY20 enacted amount.

   The Huanglongbing Multi-Agency Coordination (HLB-MAC) Group is focused on unique short-term solutions to help the citrus industry, and is the only dedicated funding source that, to-date, has developed successful pathways to provide immediate relief. Helping growers explore new possible solutions, the MAC has been incredibly popular,
and effective, in spite of its limited personnel. The agency should appropriately allocate resources based on critical need and maximum impact to the citrus industry.

Additionally, we respectfully ask for your consideration of the following report language requests, much of which you included in previous years House reports:

1. **Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service** – *Huanglongbing Emergency Response* – The Committee maintains the funding levels for Huanglongbing Emergency Response within the Specialty Crop Pests line item included in fiscal year 19. The Committee encourages APHIS to allocate sufficient resources in order to continue vital management, control, and associated activities to address citrus greening. The disease, for which there is no cure, has caused a reduction in citrus production by over 60% since 2007 in Florida alone. All citrus producing counties in Texas are under quarantine, and California has found the Asian Citrus Psyllid, the vector of the disease, in some backyard trees. The spread of this disease has called the domestic citrus industry’s future into question, costing thousands of jobs and millions in lost revenue. In addition, the agency is encouraged to support priorities and strategies identified by the Huanglongbing Multi-Agency Coordination (HLB-MAC) Group which will benefit the citrus industry. The agency should appropriately allocate resources based on critical need and maximum effect to the citrus industry.

2. **Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service** – *Citrus Health Response Program (CHRIP)* – CHRP is a national effort to protect the U.S. industry from the ravages of invasive pests and diseases. These funds are designed to partner with state departments of agriculture and industry groups to address the challenges of citrus pests and diseases. In addition to the funds provided in this account, the Committee encourages APHIS to utilize the funds available in the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Programs account to the greatest extent possible in an attempt to sustain the economic viability of the citrus industry.

3. **Agriculture Research Service** – *Citrus Huanglongbing Disease Research* – The Committee commends the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) on its’ research efforts on citrus HLB disease and encourages the agency to continue working to develop methods to reduce transmission and enhance immunity in citrus trees and to work with industry, universities, growers, and other partners to develop effective control mechanisms. The Committee also encourages ARS to coordinate its efforts with the Multi-Agency Coordination (HLB MAC) group.

4. **National Institute of Food and Agriculture** – *Citrus Disease Research Program* – The 2014 farm bill established the Emergency Citrus Disease Research and Extension
Program, which is intended to discover and develop tools for early detection, control, and eradication of diseases and pests that threaten domestic citrus production and processing. The 2019 farm bill reauthorized this program and established the Emergency Citrus Disease Research and Development Trust Fund to provide $25,000,000 per year in mandatory funding from the Commodity Credit Corporation for the program. The Committee believes research projects funded under this authority should be prioritized based on the critical threat of citrus greening and encourages National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), to the maximum extent practicable, to follow the recommendations of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Advisory Board’s citrus disease subcommittee and to collaborate with the HLB MAC group.

5. **Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – Huanglongbing Multi-Agency Coordination (HLB-MAC) Group** – The Committee recognizes the significant economic impact of this disease on the citrus industry, which is especially acute in Florida and a growing concern in both Texas and California. The Committee also understands that growers are requesting the right to try treatments that have begun to show success in early stages of testing. The Committee encourages the HLB MAC group to explore and identify new methods to expedite the delivery of promising treatments directly to willing growers, regardless of the phase of observation the treatment is at within the research pipeline. Finally, the Committee expects any funds which are redirected from existing HLB MAC projects be repurposed to other priority HLB MAC projects that are showing promising results in order to ensure these critical funds remain committed to help facilitate the design and implementation of the rapid delivery pathway to growers.

Thank you for your support for these initiatives. We are grateful for your leadership in ensuring these programs are funded to continue supporting disease research for the citrus industry.

Sincerely,

W. Gregory Steube  
Member of Congress  

Filemon Vela  
Member of Congress  

TJ Cox  
Member of Congress
Mark Takano  
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress

Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress

Val B. Demings  
Member of Congress

Stephanie Murphy  
Member of Congress

Bill Posey  
Member of Congress

Vern Buchanan  
Member of Congress

Ted S. Yoho, D.V.M.  
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress
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Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress

Harley Rouda
Member of Congress