

# California State Senate

SENATOR  
JEAN FULLER  
SIXTEENTH SENATE DISTRICT



February 8, 2018

The Honorable Dr. Richard Pan, Chair  
Budget Sub Committee No. 3 on Health and Human Services  
State Capitol, Room 5114  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Funding for Valley Fever Research**

Dear Chairman Pan,

We respectfully request that Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3 on Health and Human Services include \$3 million dollars in the 2018-19 state budget for a research grant at the California Department of Public Health to fund Valley Fever treatment research and outreach at the Valley Fever Institute at Kern Medical Center.

Coccidioidomycosis, commonly known as "Valley Fever," is a fungus found in the soil of dry, low rainfall areas. Valley Fever is caused by air or soil disturbance of tiny fungi, called Coccidioides, which live and breed within the soil. When the dust containing the spores is breathed in the fungus attacks the respiratory system, causing an infection that can lead to symptoms that resemble a cold, influenza, or pneumonia.

If left untreated or mistreated, infection can spread from the lungs into the bloodstream, causing inflammation to the skin, permanent damage to the lungs and bone tissue, and swelling of the membrane surrounding the brain, leading to meningitis, which can be devastating and even fatal.

Presently there is no cure or vaccine for Valley Fever. Studies show that early intervention ensures the best management of the disease. The most severe cases of Valley Fever stem from delayed diagnosis.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Valley Fever infection rates rose twelvefold nationwide from 1995 to 2009, and researchers estimate that the fungus infects more than 150,000 people each year who either escape detection of the disease or suffer serious ailments without knowing the cause of their illness.

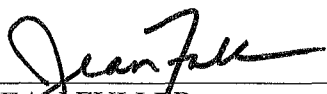
Cases of Valley Fever have been reported from most counties in California. The California counties with the highest rates of infection include San Luis Obispo, Merced, Fresno, Kern, Madera and Tulare. In 2016 there were 2,310 Valley Fever cases in Kern County alone.

The Valley Fever Institute at Kern Medical is ideally suited to be the premiere center for laboratory research, since they have the largest population of patients with Valley Fever. Patients are referred to the Institute not only locally, but regionally, nationally and internationally. Dr. Royce Johnson, Medical Director for the Institute is a leading infectious disease expert who has dedicated his career to both research and treatment of patients with Valley Fever. Currently there are clinical research trials sponsored by the National Institute of Health taking place at the Valley Fever Institute dedicated to gaining insight into the effectiveness of early treatment with medication.


As reported cases of Valley Fever continue to rise across the state of California, we must safeguard our most vulnerable population from this devastating disease. We ask that you would consider appropriating funds directed at the Valley Fever Institute for research activities earmarked toward the development of early treatment options.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
JEAN FULLER  
State Senate, District 16

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
VINCE FONG  
State Assembly, District 34

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
RUDY SALAS  
State Assembly, District 32

cc: Honorable Holly Mitchell, Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
Honorable Jim Nielsen, Vice Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
Honorable Phil Ting, Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
Honorable Jay Obernolte, Vice Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
Honorable Joaquin Arambula, Chair, Assembly Budget Sub Committee No. 1  
Mr. Mac Taylor, Legislative Analyst (3)  
Mr. Joe Stephenshaw, Staff Director, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
Mr. Scott Ogas, Consultant, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
Mr. Kirk Feely, Budget Fiscal Director, Senate Republican Fiscal Office  
Mr. Christopher Woods, Senate Pro Tempore's Office (2)  
Mr. Christian Griffith, Chief Consultant, Assembly Budget Committee  
Ms. Cyndi Hillery, Staff Director, Assembly Republican Fiscal Committee

Ms. Cheri West, Deputy Chief of Staff, Policy, Assembly Republican Leader's Office  
Mr. Jim Richardson, Policy and Fiscal Director, Assembly Republican Leader's Office  
Mr. Michael Wilkening, Undersecretary, California Health and Human Services Agency  
Ms. Michelle Baass, Deputy Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency  
Ms. Jane Olson-Morgan, Assistant Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency  
Ms. Samantha Lui, Assistant Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency  
Dr. Karen Smith, Director, California Department of Public Health  
Mr. Brandon Nunes, Chief Deputy Director, California Department of Public Health  
Mr. Alan Lum, Deputy Director, Administration Division, California Department of Public Health