

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 23, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

Reports that the Asian giant hornet, *Vespa mandarinia*, have recently been found in Washington State have raised alarm about the potential devastating impact these predacious insects could have on our nation's pollinators, and thus our nation's food supply, should they become established. Given how quickly these hornets can decimate honeybee colonies, which are estimated to pollinate one-third of our food supply and have an estimated value of \$20 billion to U.S. crop production, it is in the nation's best interest to rapidly deploy resources at all levels of government to quickly find and eradicate these insects.

We understand that to date USDA has been working closely with the Washington State Department of Agriculture to detect and eradicate these insects. This includes providing approximately \$400,000 to support research, survey, and eradication efforts as well as providing technical support to Washington State. Additionally, we understand that USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has also been working with federal land management agencies, including the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Armed Forces Pest Management Board, as they all own and manage land in the impacted area.

As the giant hornet has only been found in a limited area to date, the resources and response that USDA has provided are proportional to the severity of the situation. However, knowing the potential for spread and decimation of entire honeybee colonies, if these giant hornets are not quickly detected and eradicated in Washington State or if they are detected at other ports of entry, we urge USDA to consider tapping into additional resources provided by the Plant Protection Act's Section 7721 (PPA 7721) program. This program, administered by USDA APHIS, provides funding necessary to detect and respond to invasive pest emergencies should a pest of high economic consequence be found in the United States. Of the \$70 million that Congress provided for the program in FY2020, \$15.5 million was set aside to support rapid response during invasive pest emergencies, such as the recent arrival of these giant hornets.

While the giant hornet's specific mode of arrival to the U.S. is currently unknown, it is speculated that it arrived via ship, either in the ballast or within cargo. It has also been reported that the giant hornet has been found in the Canadian province of British Columbia. Our understanding is that ports in Asia do not currently have any procedures in place to detect or trap the hornet. To immediately stop further introduction and spread of these giant hornets to all U.S. ports, USDA APHIS should consider putting forward a portion of this emergency funding to not only enhance inspections and surveys at ports of entry, but also develop effective traps, place these traps at major ports of entry, and establish an approved treatment method to quickly deploy should these giant hornets be detected. As Hawaii receives shipments of goods from Washington State, Canada, and Asia, the arrival of the giant hornet would be devastating to our local agricultural industry. Hawaii has a thriving queen bee breeding industry that brings in \$10 million a year to Hawaii's economy, and 80 percent of crops grown here are pollinated by bees. Hawaii also supplies the honeybee queens used in pollination services of 40 percent of the hives used in the continental United States.

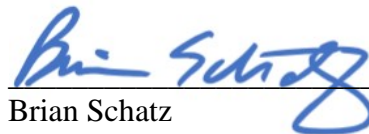
This recent news also renews focus on threats from other invasive hornets, such as the greater banded hornet (*Vespa tropica*), that became established on Guam in 2016. This invasive hornet also preys on honeybees and should it become established in Hawaii or the mainland U.S., could have a negative impact on agriculture and thus be of high economic consequence.

As such, we appreciate USDA's response to the giant hornet's arrival in Washington State to date and request that should the situation with this or other invasive hornets like the greater banded hornet warrant additional federal resources, that you allocate a portion of Section 7721 emergency funding to further detection and eradication efforts as well as enhance inspections for invasive hornets at U.S. ports of entry.

Sincerely,



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Tulsi Gabbard
United States Representative



Ed Case
United States Representative