

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS KATHRYN BARGER AND SHEILA KUEHL

AUGUST 13, 2019

Valley Fever Awareness and Support for H.R. 2858

Valley Fever, also known as *coccidioidomycosis*, is a fungal disease contracted through the inhalation of certain spores, which are native to the soils common in the southwestern United States. When these soils are disturbed, spores can become airborne, posing a health risk to any who may inhale them.

According to the California Department of Public Health, cases of Valley Fever rose by over 11 percent across the state in 2018, and recent figures suggest that this trend is not set to abate. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health recorded a total of 1001 Valley Fever cases in 2017, a 24% increase from the 809 cases recorded in 2016.

Due to a variety of geographic factors, the Antelope Valley is particularly susceptible to Valley Fever, and residents of this region are 9-times as likely to contract the fungal disease. Those who are exposed to Valley Fever often remain asymptomatic; but in many, the fungus causes flu-like symptoms. In rare cases, these symptoms can devolve into meningitis or pneumonia. While Valley Fever is indiscriminate in whom it affects, certain populations such as seniors, pregnant women, and those with immunodeficiency disease are at a higher risk of contracting the disease. Increasing public awareness of the prevalence of Valley Fever across the county is an important public health priority.

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H.R. 2858, the Finding Orphan-disease Remedies with Antifungal Research and Development (FORWARD) Act of 2019, has been introduced to the House of Representatives by Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, whose Kern County district is disproportionately affected by Valley Fever. The bill seeks to provide federal resources to combat the proliferation of this disease. The FORWARD Act would create a Valley Fever Working Group, which would provide the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) with regular updates on antifungal research and development, and would make recommendations to states acutely affected by Valley Fever incidences. The bill would also establish a federal grant funding program for antifungal research, under which HHS would match state and local grants allocated to institutions conducting research of this type, capped at a sum of \$8 million for each of fiscal years 2021 through 2025. The bill has bipartisan support, and is cosponsored by Representatives Karen Bass (D-CA), Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), TJ Cox (D-CA), Greg Stanton (D-AZ), Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ), David Schweikert (R-AZ), Duncan Hunter (R-CA), Tom Cole (R-OK), Paul Cook (R-CA), and Ken Calvert (R-CA).

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Proclaim the month of August 2019 as “Valley Fever Awareness Month”, throughout the County of Los Angeles.
2. Direct the Chief Executive Office of Intergovernmental Affairs to send a 5-signature letter to the Speaker of the House and the Los Angeles County Congressional Delegation in support of H.R. 2858.

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